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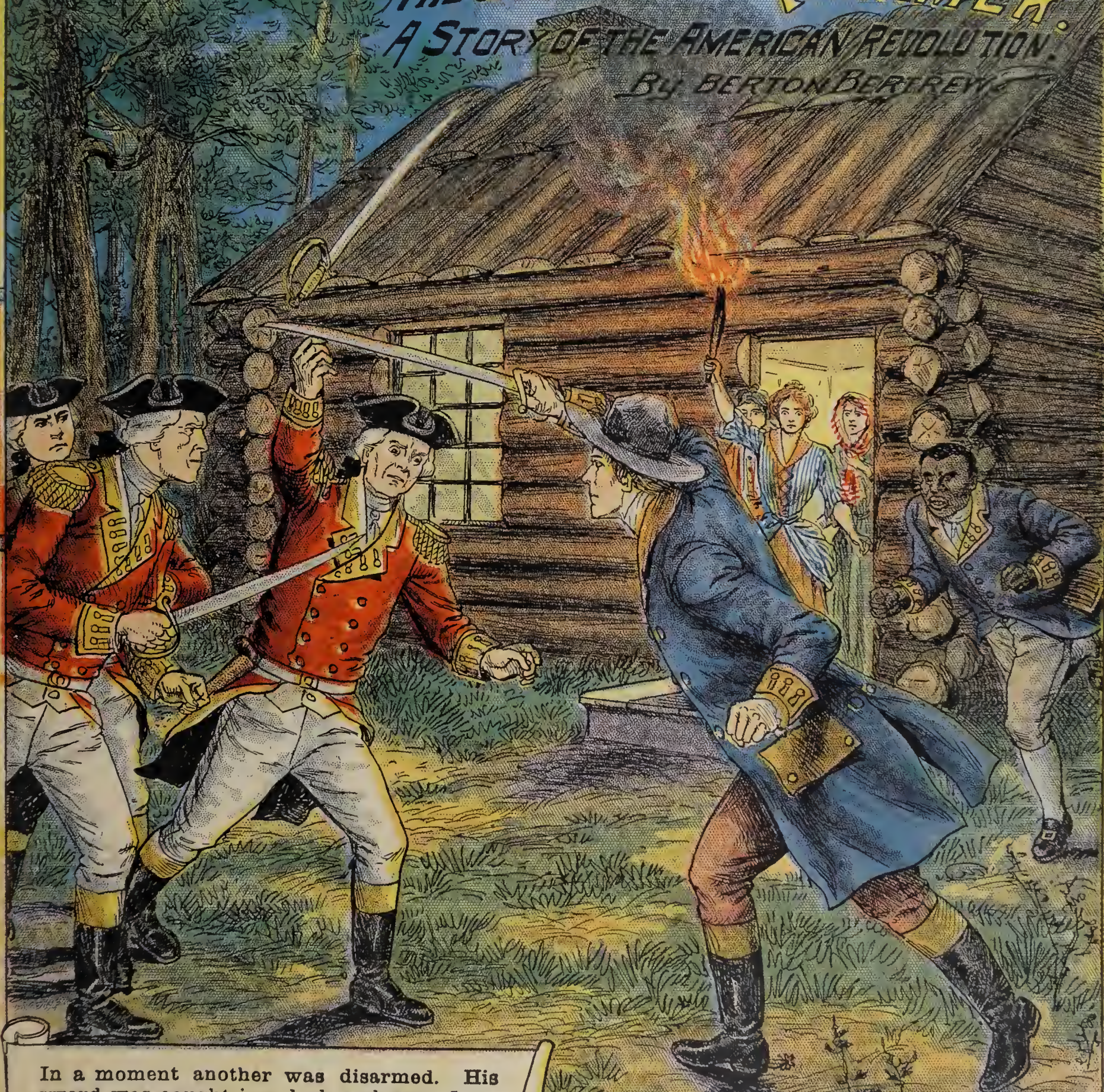
5 CENTS.

PLUCK AND LUCK

THE BULLET (HARMER)

A STORY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

BY BERTON BERTREY.



In a moment another was disarmed. His sword was caught in a lock and sent flying clear over the cabin. He, too, drew his pistol and fired at Burt. "Coward!" cried the woman in the cabin door.

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PLUCK AND LUCK

Stories of Adventure.

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PRICE 5 CENTS.

THE BULLET CHARMER

A STORY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

By Berton Bertrew.

CHAPTER I.

THE TERRIBLE FIGHT—A BRITISH PRISONER—NICK BURT BEFORE GENERAL GREENE.

The year 1781 was a memorable one for the American patriots. They were nearly worn out with hunger, fatigue and many disastrous defeats. The enemy, it is true, was conscious that he was engaged in a hopeless task. A victory did him but little good, save in the number of patriots killed or captured. He knew that the country was so vast that he could not occupy it with his troops. He might hold all the cities, towns and strong strategic points, but the patriots would still have the great country at their back.

With all this, and within two years of the acknowledgment of their independence by the British Government, the patriots were in a bad way, particularly in the South.

The enemy had captured Charleston and overrun the Carolinas. There was no organized army to oppose him for many months after the capture of the city, save the small partisan bands of Sumter, Marion, Horry, Lee, Hampton and others who served without pay, hid in the swamps, and struck only when they could do good work, more often by night than in the daytime.

The enemy was well armed and disciplined. Many of the redcoats had served in the wars in Europe, and understood the art of war as known in those days. The fierce Tarleton, a dashing, reckless officer, commanded the British cavalry and led a merciless pursuit of the small, ragged and poorly armed bands of patriots through fields, forests and swamps.

But dark as were those days that tried men's souls, the patriots never lost hope. The bitterness of their hatred of tyranny grew stronger with time, and the death-roll lengthened as the days, weeks and months rolled by.

In the Carolinas the war assumed an intensely partisan form. The Whigs, as the patriots were called, believed the Tories, who were friends of the king, were all traitors to their country. They both commenced a war of extermination against each other. Neighbor against neighbor, and, in many instances, father against son and brother against brother.

Such was the condition of the Carolinas in the spring of 1781. Roving bands of Tories and redcoats were scattered all over the country, burning, killing and plundering. Neither age nor sex excited their sympathy. War had made them demons. Greene was coming down from Virginia with a small army of Continentals, and Rawdon, the British commander, with his tried veterans, was encamped at Camden, quietly waiting for him.

The patriots were not afraid of him. They were always anxious to meet him when they had anything like an equal number of troops to oppose him with.

The gallant Greene encamped at Hobkirk's Hill, within a mile or two of the British lines, and began to prepare for a contest that would try the mettle of the two armies.

Rawdon was astonished at the confidence of the patriots, and suspected that they had more men than he had heard of. He grew cautious, and did not care to attack them until he was more sure of their numbers. Accordingly he sent ten men out on a road to reconnoiter.

They were on splendid chargers and felt confident enough to charge double their number of patriots.

When a little over halfway between the two armies they met a solitary horseman in the road. He seemed unconcerned about his safety, for he never turned nor made any effort to get out of their way. That he was a patriot they well knew from his dress, and he carried a rifle and a broadsword—a very heavy sword it was, too.

"Halt!" said the British captain, as they came abreast of him.

"Hello! What's the matter?" the patriot asked.

"Who are you?" the captain asked.

"I am a man, a plain citizen of this country," was the reply.

"Are you a loyal man?"

"Yes, sir. I pride myself on my loyalty to my country."

The captain looked fierce.

"But are you loyal to the king?"

"No!"

"I admire your candor, sir," the captain said. "But my duty compels me to arrest all rebels on the king's highway."

"The king has no highway in this country. He was never in America. Americans have nothing to do with him. He lives three thousand miles away. We owe him nothing, and——"

"Silence, sir!" thundered the British officer, growing enraged at the outspoken language of the stranger. "You are a prisoner."

"You are mistaken. I am not a prisoner."

"Then you are a dead man!" hissed the captain, drawing his sword. The patriot flashed his blade in the sunlight at the same instant.

Surrender!"

"Never!"

Swish! clash! thud! and the British captain was cut down.

"S'death!" exclaimed the next in command, a stalwart sergeant. "Shoot him down!"

Each of the nine redcoats drew his pistol from his holster and fired at his breast.

They were all within a few feet of him, some so close that the smoke of their pistols puffed in his face. Yet he sat unmoved in his saddle, to their intense amazement.

"It's my turn now!" he said, drawing a brace of pistols, one in each hand. The next moment he fired, and two redcoats tumbled to the ground. Then, after replacing his pistols, he rushed on them with his heavy sword.

Clash—clash!

Two more went down.

"Five down!" he chuckled, as he wheeled and charged again. The others met him bravely, two of them having their sabres broken in their hands.

That was more than they could stand. They put spurs to their horses and dashed back toward Camden at the top of their speed.

The stranger pursued.

He overtook one of them.

"Stop!" he said, "or I'll cut you down!"

"Don't strike," said the Briton. "I surrender."

The others dashed on and escaped.

"Very well," the patriot said. "Give me your sword."

The Briton handed over the weapon.

The patriot knew the redcoat's pistols were empty, hence did not ask for them.

"Now turn about and ride to Hobkirk's Hill with me."

He turned his horse's head in the direction of the patriot camp.

"Who are you?" the redcoat asked, as he rode alongside of the stranger.

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I want to know who the man is that can whip ten of the king's soldiers in a hand-to-hand encounter."

"It's not the first time; therefore nothing new."

The Briton glared at him for a minute or two and then turned pale.

"By the king's crown!" he suddenly exclaimed, "I believe you are the Bullet Charmer!"

"You are right. I am Nick Burt, the patriot."

"And the Bullet Charmer?"

"Yes."

"I have often heard of you, sir, but did not believe the half I was told. Can no bullet hurt you?"

"You have seen for yourself to-day," was the quiet reply. "I don't think any British bullet will ever hurt me. I have a charm against them."

"I know they cannot, sir. Nor can a British sabre, either."

"I am not afraid of any sabre, for I have a strong arm and trusty blade."

General Greene received them in his tent, and heard the report of the captain.

"Very well, captain," the general said. "Return to your post. Keep a sharp lookout for the enemy."

The captain saluted his commander and retired.

"Where did you find this prisoner?" the general asked, turning to Burt.

"Out on the main road about a half mile from your lines," was the prompt reply.

"Was he by himself?"

"No, sir. There were several of them, but this one is all I could take alive."

"How many did you kill?"

"Six, I believe."

General Greene stared incredulously at Burt.

"How many did he kill?" he asked, turning to the prisoner.

"Six, sir," was the reply.

"Who are you?"

"Nick Burt, sir."

"Of whose command?"

"My own. I am a sort of independent arm of the service."

"Who knows you here?"

"General Sumter and several others."

General Greene sent his orderly with a message to the Game Cock, as Sumter was called, summoning him to headquarters.

A half hour later General Sumter entered, saluted the commander, and then grasped Burt by the hand.

"Glad to see you, Burt," he said.

"You know him, do you?" General Greene asked.

"Yes, sir, I know him well," replied Sumter. "He is the greatest patriot in South Carolina."

CHAPTER II.

NICK BURT'S SECRET—THE CONTINENTAL SOLDIER AND HIS MISTAKE.

General Greene glared at Sumter for a moment or two, as if in a quandary about something.

"Why do you not have such men in the service?" he asked of Sumter.

"He is in the service, general," Sumter replied.

"Mustered in?"

"No. That would reduce him to simply one man. Alone and allowed to fight in his own way, he is worth more to the cause than any fifty men in the army."

General Greene was still more amazed.

"I wish to talk with you again, Mr. Burt," he said to our hero. "Come here this evening, if you please."

Burt bowed himself out of the presence of the general and left the Briton in his charge. General Greene questioned the dragoon and got such information as he could from him.

"Having questioned him as much as he desired, he sent the prisoner in charge of an officer to the barracks, a rude structure for the safe-keeping of prisoners.

General Sumter then explained to General Greene that Nick Burt was a patriot fighting on his own hook, having vowed to slay one hundred redcoats and as many Tories besides, in return for the murder of his wife and child in the early part of the war.

"He is a young man yet," he said.

"He is certainly an extraordinary man," remarked Greene. "When he told me he had killed six and captured one out of a party of a dozen or more, I was suspicious of him. Tender him my apologies when you see him."

"I will," said Sumter.

"The general doubts me," chuckled Burt, as he walked out of General Greene's tent, "but the Game Cock will tell him enough to make him drop all that. It was a lucky thing for me that I secured this old coat of mail when I was in Europe."

Instead of going toward the lines he made his way to the rear, entered a dense piece of woods, and stopped at a secluded spot, where he thought he would be free from interruption. There he unbuttoned his coat at the breast, threw it off, removed a "hickory" shirt, as the coarse cotton shirts of those days were called, and displayed a stalwart frame incased from neck to heels in a complete suit of steel armor, from which leaden bullets would drop harmless to the ground.

Around his chest and over against his shoulder blades, held together by means of strong buckskin straps, were several strangely shaped plates of iron. They seemed to have many queer joints that were made for a certain end.

Pulling a cord, the iron plates flew up and clapped together about his head, completely inclosing like the shell of a cocoa-

nut. In front were holes for the eyes, nose and mouth, not unlike the human face in shape and contour.

Pulling another string, the plates slipped down over his chest and back again, making but little noise in so doing.

Strolling back to the camp, he quietly waited for General Greene to send for him. Sumter met him and said:

"The general desired me to tender you an apology for suspecting your statements to him. He had not heard of you till I told him all I knew about you. I don't think he has any doubts about you now."

"Thank you, general," said Burt. "I knew he didn't know me."

"He wants to see you at supper at headquarters. You are to go with me."

"I shall be ready at any time, general."

"Come to my headquarters at six o'clock, then."

He strolled off around the camp, listening to the talks of the old Continentals, who had come down with Greene. They were disposed to make sport of the arms and dress of the partisans under Sumter, who were but poorly armed and had no uniforms. The regulars knew but little of the splendid fighting qualities of those ragged patriots.

At one campfire a stalwart Continental hailed him with:

"I say, comrade, how many of you does it take to whip one redcoat?"

"I don't really know, comrade," was the quiet reply. "I saw one of Sumter's men kill six redcoats to-day, and never got a scratch."

The Continental glared at him.

"Why not say sixty, comrade, and make a big thing of it at once?"

"Because it wouldn't be true," was the reply.

"Oh, I thought you were leaving truth out altogether." And the Continentals roared with laughter.

That evening, after dining with the commander of all the forces in the Carolinas, Nick Burt held quite a long conversation with him.

"Mr. Burt," said the general, "do you know where General Marion is?"

"No, sir. That's something no man knows except those that are with him. The Swamp Fox is here and there and yonder all the time. He is somewhere up on the Congaree."

"Can you find him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you take him a letter from me?"

"With pleasure, general."

"I will write it now, then, while you wait," and he called for pen and paper.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER THE SWAMP FOX.

While the general was writing the letter the Game Cock of the Carolinas came up to our hero and beckoned him aside.

"You are going to Marion," he whispered. "Tell him from me to strike hard and quick. The time has come when the final blow must be struck. If you see"—here his voice sank to an almost inaudible whisper—"tell him I have not forgotten my promise to him. The time is not quite ripe for that."

"Here's the letter," said General Greene, coming forward and handing him a sealed packet. "When will you be off?"

"In ten minutes, if you will give me the password."

General Greene whispered the word. He bowed and then shook hands with Sumter.

"Remember!" whispered the Game Cock.

"I will," he replied, and then he stalked away, and was soon lost to sight.

Mounting his horse, Nick Burt started out toward the Con-

garee river. He passed the lines with the password, and then pushed on at a brisk canter.

The stars were twinkling brightly overhead, yet where the somber shadow of the trees darkened the road he had to trust his sagacious horse to pilot the way safely.

He was going at a brisk pace when about four miles from Camden a strong, harsh voice cried out from the roadside:

"Halt!"

He paid no attention to the demand, but passed on.

Crack! Crack!

Two bullets rattled against his back, doing no damage.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed, and his gray charger kept on the way.

Burt continued on his way toward the Congaree, which he hoped to reach at daylight. But he was destined to meet more Tories ere he struck the river.

Only five or six miles farther on the way, a half dozen men rushed out into the road. Two seized his horse's head and pushed him back on his haunches.

"Don't be in such a hurry," said one of the men.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" he asked.

"We are king's men, and we want you," was the reply.

"You don't want me," he returned.

"Why not?"

"Because you don't," and he drew his heavy sword and cut down two of them ere they could resist. The other four fired at him.

"I am the Bullet Charmer," he said. "Fire away!" and another went down.

Exclamations of terror burst from the other three as they sprang back into the woods.

He did not pursue them.

He had not time to do that. The letter of General Greene had to be delivered to Marion as soon as possible. He was determined to earn the praise of the commander of the department at all hazards.

Only once more did he meet with Tories on the way. Four Tories with two Whig prisoners stopped him.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked.

"We want you. You make three rebels we've picked up to-night."

"How do you know I am a rebel?"

"Because no king's men are traveling toward the Congaree just now. They are going the other way."

"Oh, that's the way you reason, is it? Don't you know that Greene and the Continental army are back the other way?"

"Yes, and that Rawdon and the king's army are there, too. Get down from that horse, or we'll put more lead into you than you can carry."

"Don't shoot. I'll get down," and he dismounted and stood in their midst.

One took his rifle, another his sword, and a third secured the pistols in his holsters.

"You have disarmed me," he said.

"Yes, and we are going to do more than that," replied one of the Tories, a brutal kind of a fellow, producing a piece of strong cord. "Cross your hands."

"What for?"

"We are going to hang you. Cross your hands, you traitor!"

"Never!"

Two of them rushed upon him. He pulled a cord attached to his iron helmet and at a flash his head was incased in it. Then he caught two of them by the collars and smashed their faces together with such force as to knock both of them perfectly senseless.

The third man, who held the cord to bind his hands, was knocked down. The fourth man fired a pistol full at his

breast. The next moment he was knocked completely out of time.

"Good Heavens!" cried one of the bound patriots, "cut us loose and we will finish them."

He took up a knife from the ground where it had been dropped by one of the Tories, and cut them loose.

The other two Tories sprang to their feet and started to run. Burt grabbed them. They struggled and fought like maniacs. Burt chuckled.

"Ha, ha, ha! I'm the third rebel picked up to-night, am I? I'm in a hurry, but, by my soul, I'll wait long enough to see my two friends hang you."

"Yes—yes—they were going to hang us!" cried the two patriots. "We will hang them as high as Haman."

"Oh, don't hang us!" pleaded the two wretches.

"It makes some little difference who does the hanging, don't it?" Burt asked.

"But we were not going to hang anybody," they protested.

"You burned down my cabin this evening," said one of the patriots, "turning my wife and children homeless into the woods. I'll hang you for that if I hang before morning myself."

"Be quick about it," suggested Burt. "I haven't long to stay."

"If you will spare me I will tell you where there are other prisoners who are to be hanged to-night," said one of the Tories.

"How many prisoners?" Burt asked.

"Five."

"How many Tories?"

"Eight."

"Who has command?"

"Job Horsey."

"Ah, I know him. How far from here?"

"Only two miles."

"If you tell the truth, and we can reach there in time to save them we will spare you this time. Now, lead the way."

"Hold on," said the two patriots, till we hang this other fellow."

"String him up, then."

They strung him up.

Burt had uncovered his head immediately after knocking down the four Tories, so that he appeared as any other individual. In the darkness they had not been able to see either his face or his helmet so as to detect the difference.

True to his word, the Tory led the three men to a dense wood where around a campfire they saw eight Tories and five Whigs. The latter were prisoners, bound hand and foot.

"Just stand here till I attend to them," said Burt in a whisper to his companions.

"You are not going to attack them all by yourself, are you?" one of them asked.

"Yes, I am. Keep your hand on your prisoner."

Burt stalked forward like a man who did not care to keep his presence a secret from anyone.

The guard hailed him.

He stalked boldly up to him. The guard fired full at his breast. It never checked him in the least. Terrified beyond expression, the guard rushed toward the campfire, crying out:

"I shot him through the breast, but it doesn't stop him."

The next moment the tall form of Nick Burt stood by the campfire.

Job Horsey, the Tory leader, looked up at him, and turned deathly pale.

"The Bullet Charmer!" he gasped, his eyes ready almost to pop out of his head.

The mention of that dreaded name caused a chorus of

shrieks to burst from the Tories, and they broke and fled like timid sheep from the presence of a wolf.

Burt drew a knife and cut the cords that bound the prisoners.

"Take their rifles and follow me," he said. "You are free as the air."

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW PATRIOT MADE.

The patriot prisoners were amazed at their good fortune. They had all heard of the Bullet Charmer, the daring patriot who was bullet-proof, but had never before seen him. Now that he had turned up and rescued them by the mere terror his name inspired, they felt almost inclined to fall down at his feet and worship him.

But he gave them but little time to gaze at him. Turning to one of them, he said:

"Take these rifles and take care of yourselves. I have no time to lose;" and he pointed to the rifles the Tories had left behind in their hasty flight.

The overjoyed patriots seized the arms and then turned to their deliverer again.

Burt signaled for the other two patriots to come up with their prisoner. They did so, and it was ascertained that two of the rescued knew the prisoner as a Tory.

"He's a Tory," said one of the patriots, "and a bad one, too. He helped burn down Joe Buckley's house."

"Yes," said the prisoner, "I am a king's man. But you are indebted to me for your lives to-night."

"How is that?" several asked at once.

"I told him," nodding toward Nick Burt, "where you were, and piloted the way."

They looked at Burt.

"Yes," said the Bullet Charmer; "we were going to hang him when he said he would exchange six patriot lives for his own. We accepted his proposition, for we consider one patriot worth a dozen traitors."

"I don't like being called a traitor," said the Tory, "for I have never rebelled against my king, as you have. But I can't help myself."

"You love your country," said Burt, "but have gotten a wrong idea of how to serve her. Join your neighbors in driving the king's troops out of the country, and help make a government to suit yourself. When you go back to your Tory friends, they will wreck vengeance on you for betraying them to save your own life. You had better join us, and help drive the redcoats out of the country."

"What you say impresses me very much," said the Tory. "I am now placed between two fires. My only safety is in joining some regular band of Whigs, such as Marion's or Sumter's, where my Tory friends can't well get at me."

"Give me your hand on that!" and Burt extended his hand to him. "Mount your horse and go with me. I will lead you to Marion. I am on my way there, and intend to be with him by sunrise if possible."

The Tory grasped his hand and shook it warmly.

"I will go with you," he said, "and will no longer fight for the king. They told me the king was coming here to live."

"He knows better than to come to America. It's the last place in the world he would dare show himself in. Now, friends, take care of yourselves. You are well armed. I must go."

He led the way to his horse. The Tory mounted his, and they moved off toward the main road again.

When they were out in the road Burt said to the Tory:

"If we are halted you must leave everything to me."

"Yes, for you can do as you please."

They rode forward some ten miles, and came near to the Congaree river.

The sun was just peeping over the hills when they were hailed from the bushes on the side of the road:

"Halt!"

Both instantly came to a halt.

"Who are you?"

"Patriots!" replied Burt.

"Where from?"

"From above."

"Dismount and come in."

Burt promptly dismounted, and the other followed his example.

"Oh!" exclaimed a voice in the bushes, "is that you, Nick Burt?"

"Yes," was the reply. "How are our friends now?"

"Well, and doing well."

"Where's the Swamp Fox?"

"Over the river."

"How far up?"

"Near the Motte place. Any news?" and two men came forward and shook hands with him.

"Who is that with you?" one of the patriots asked.

"A recruit," he replied.

Mounting their horses, they pushed on toward the river, crossed at a ford, and were soon on the right track of the famous Swamp Fox.

"You will soon see General Marion," Burt said to his companion as they entered the swamp.

"I have heard so much about him that I shall be glad to see him."

"If you stick close to him, you will never fall into the hands of the king's men, I can assure you."

"Then I shall be sure to keep up with him."

A low whistle startled them.

The two men stopped suddenly.

Burt made a similar signal.

"All right," said a voice, though the speaker was unseen.

"Come on," said Burt, leading the way.

They pressed forward till they struck a small island of about four or five acres, which seemed to be a camp, for it was full of horses and men.

"Hello, Burt!" half a hundred men exclaimed at once, as our hero came into view. "What's the news?"

"Good news," he said, shaking hands right and left. "Greene and his Continentals at Hobkirk's Hill are looking Rawdon in the face, and daring him to come out and fight."

The patriots set up a cheer, and scores came running from other parts of the island to see what occasioned it.

Old friends gathered around and shook his hand, asking questions.

"I must report to the Swamp Fox first, comrades," he said, "and then we'll have a smoke and a chat around the camp-fire. Have you anything to eat? I am as hungry as a wolf."

"Plenty of potatoes."

"That's good enough for the king himself. I'll take some as soon as I report."

He led the way toward General Marion's tent. The dark, swarthy little hero came out to meet him, grasping his hand as if they were old friends, and pulled him into his tent.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE CAMP OF THE LITTLE SWAMP FOX.

The Tory who had accompanied our hero to the lair of the famous Swamp Fox, of whom he had heard so much, remained outside the tent till Burt should appear again.

The general and our hero remained in a whispered conversation in the tent for some thirty minutes.

"Nick Burt," said General Marion, "you have come just in time to enable me to strike a blow. Your news is a godsend; I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

"I am glad, general, that I have been of service to the cause. Can you use me any farther? I am yours to command."

"Stop with us a while; we may have need of your strong arm and good judgment."

There was a faint smile on the swarthy features of the general as he spoke.

Nick Burt knew that there would soon be work for the patriots on that little island.

"I will remain and see the fun, general," he said, and then he told about the new recruit he had brought with him. The general told one of his aides to muster him into the service. In less than ten minutes the whilom Tory was a full-fledged patriot, and a member of Marion's night-riders.

Burt took him by the hand and said:

"If you ever get into trouble remember that Nick Burt is your friend. You have done well. Our men will stand by you and see that you are protected."

He was then assigned to Major Horry's command, and was received by the men with a cordial shake of the hand.

Burt now walked over to Horry's quarters.

At Major Horry's quarters Burt met with a hearty welcome and a breakfast of potatoes and rice. That was all he could get that morning, and the brave patriot was satisfied with the fare.

While he was eating a scout came up and whispered to the major.

"Is that so?" the major asked in a tone of much surprise.

"Yes, sir. I know him personally," said the scout.

"Burt," the major said turning to our hero, "this man says the recruit you brought in this morning is a rank Tory."

"Well, he was yesterday, but I think he is a good Whig to-day."

"How is that?"

"I converted him."

"Are you sure he is converted?"

"Quite sure," and then he told the story of the capture of the Tory and the release of the captive Whigs.

"Why, how in thunder did you manage it?"

"I surrounded them."

The major roared.

"You can trust that fellow after that. He dare not go back to the Tories. He will be faithful in self-defense."

"I think so, too," the major said. "I am glad you converted him. Does the general know about him?"

"Yes—he ordered one of his staff to muster him into service."

"Good! Now, tell us the news from General Greene."

Burt related to a batch of officers all he knew about the position of the two armies at Camden and Hobkirk's Hill, saying:

"A battle is likely to occur at any moment."

He little dreamed that at that very moment a battle was raging at Hobkirk's Hill. The prisoner he had captured the day before in the road between the two armies had made his escape in the night and carried such information to Rawdon, the British commander, as to cause him to determine on an immediate attack. Accordingly he commenced an aggressive movement at sunrise. The two lines being only a mile apart, both sides were soon engaged in hot work.

That evening at sunset a scout came in with the report of the battle. Marion frankly told his men that the patriots had been compelled to retreat, and then ordered them to mount. They promptly obeyed, and in ten minutes only a small guard remained on the island in the swamp.

Under the light of the stars the little band followed their

daring leader. If any of them spoke it was in low tones. Only the clatter of the horses' hoofs was heard as they pushed through the woods toward the road that led toward Fort Motte up the river.

Fort Motte was the large residence of Mrs. Motte, a wealthy widow, which the British had seized and fortified. The patriotic widow had ordered her servants to run most of the cattle and horses into the swamp, and had herself taken refuge in the cabin of a poor family some two miles distant.

General Marion sent Nick Burt, with Captain Singleton and his bold riders, in advance to act as scouts.

When they were within a mile of the Motte place, Burt said he wanted to cross the river and scour the country in that direction, promising to meet him about a mile above the fort.

"Take as many men as you think you may need," said Captain Singleton.

"I don't want any men, but you may let Pomp go. I may have some work for him to do."

"Yes—take him along. Pomp?"

"Sah?"

"Go with Mr. Burt, and be a good nigger."

"Yes, sah," replied the black, grinning from ear to ear as he turned his horse's head to join Burt, who was making toward the river.

"Whar youse gwine, Marse Nick?" Pomp asked as he caught up with him.

"To the other side," was the quiet reply, as his horse plunged into the river and commenced swimming for the opposite bank.

CHAPTER VI.

AN OLD FRIEND AGAIN—A SINGULAR MEETING.

Pomp had been about six years in the service, and knew all about the duties of a patriot soldier, slave though he was. He did not hesitate a moment to follow Nick Burt when he urged his horse into the waters of the Congaree.

When the bold patriot reached the farther bank Pomp was alongside of him. Both horses were good swimmers, and had swam river before.

"I am going up to the Motte place to see how many redcoats are there, Pomp," Burt said to the black when they were once more on terra firma.

"Golly, Marse Nick!" exclaimed Pomp, "de woods up dere am full ob dem redcoats!"

"How do you know that?"

"Kase I seed 'em wid my own eyes."

"When?"

"Las' week, sah."

"Oh, you were up this way, were you?"

"Yes, sah."

"What were you doing up this way, Pomp?"

Pomp tried hard not to hear, but Burt repeated the question. Captain Singleton had told him about Pomp being in love with a likely negro wench on the Motte plantation.

"You came to see Mandy, didn't you?"

"Marse Nick!" exclaimed Pomp, with a guilty start. "Youse know eberyting! Who tole youse dat, sah?"

"Never mind, Pomp; I know a good many things you think I don't. Mandy is a good girl. I hope she loves you."

"Yes, sah, she does," and his thick lips smacked as if relishing the last kiss he had from his dusky sweetheart.

"I am glad to hear that, and hope you may have a chance to see her to-night."

"She ain't dar no more, sah," Pomp ventured to remark.

"She isn't?"

"No, sah. She's wid de missus down at de Willis eabin."

"Is that so? Why, we are near there now. Let's go by and see her."

Pomp made no objection. What lover would? He turned and followed Burt in silence, and in a few minutes they were in sight of the Willis eabin.

A dog barked furiously.

"Look out dar!" cried Pomp. "I know that dog!"

Burt laughed and very quietly dismounted.

The dog flew at him as if he would tear him into mince-meat. Burt turned and walked toward the faithful animal, saying:

"Keep quiet, sir!"

The dog ceased barking and retired, while the bold scout went up to the door of the cabin and knocked gently,

"Who is it?" was asked in a gentle, timid voice from within.

"A friend," Burt replied.

"Ah! I know that voice," exclaimed another female voice.

"It's Nick Burt. Open the door."

The door flew open and revealed a cheerful scene within. Two elderly ladies and two of about eighteen or nineteen years sat by the fire.

Nick entered the cabin and the door was closed behind him. Three of the ladies rushed forward to grasp his hand. Mrs. Motte, the wealthy and patriotic widow, whose elegant house was now turned into a British fort, introduced the fourth young lady as Miss Emily Geiger, who was visiting her house when the redcoats descended upon it.

Emily Geiger was a beautiful girl. Burt gazed at her in undisguised admiration. She in turn thought him the most manly-looking soldier she had ever seen.

Burt briefly related the news to the women. They then told how they had fared since the enemy descended upon the Motte plantation.

"All the men in the neighborhood have had to go to the swamp," Mrs. Willis said, "and we have been here all this week without any protection whatsoever."

"Where is Mandy?" Burt suddenly asked.

"In the kitchen. Why?"

"Her sweetheart—Singleton's Pomp—is outside. I thought she would like to see him."

The ladies laughed, and Mrs. Motte went into the other room and told Mandy she could go out and see Pomp if she wished. She darted out, and in a few minutes the lovers were together.

A half hour passed, and then Mandy burst into the house, saying:

"De redcoats am a-comin'!"

"Fly! Fly for your life!" cried the women, urging Burt to leave the house.

"Keep quiet, ladies," he said. "I never run from redcoats. Take your seats again."

Rap—rap—rap!

"Open the door," whispered Burt.

Mrs. Willis opened the door, and three British officers stood there.

"Good evening, captain!" she said, recognizing one who had been here before. "Come in."

The captain stepped inside, followed by the other two, whom he introduced to the ladies.

"Who have we here?" the captain asked, turning to Burt. "I don't remember ever seeing you before, sir."

"Neither have I had the pleasure of seeing you before," said Burt. "I am Nick Burt, of the patriot army. You belong to the king's army, I believe?"

The captain stared at him in the greatest amazement.

"Yes," he said. "I am a captain in his majesty's army. What rank do you hold in the rebel army?"

"A much higher rank than that, but as I have not my commission with me I will not state what it is. I have called on

these ladies to pay my respects; they are friends of mine. I presume you respect them also, and——"

"Of course we do, and respect your presumption, too," replied the captain, interrupting him. "We shall have to make you our prisoner, you know."

"We will talk about that after our visit to these ladies. I shall only be too happy to yield to superior force. Take seats, gentlemen, and let war and its long train of evils be forgotten in the presence of these ladies."

"I am sorry we have no wine to offer you, gentlemen," said Mrs. Motte, smiling. "It's one of the evils of war that we have not. Will you have a game of whist?"

"With all my heart, madam," said the captain.

Mrs. Willis produced an old, well-worn pack of cards, and in a few minutes the little party were deep in the mysteries of whist. Wit and repartee abounded. They laughed heartily, and no one would have supposed that a deadly duel was to follow that pleasant hour.

At the end of the hour the British captain said:

"We must return to our post. Will you do us the honor of accompanying us, sir?"

"With all my heart," replied Burt, rising and reaching for his hat.

"Gentlemen," said Mrs. Motte, "please don't mar this pleasant meeting by strife. It will remain a pleasant memory with us if you do not."

"There will be no strife, madam," said one of the Britons, confidently. "Our duty compels us, however, to make your friend a prisoner."

"Come on!" and Burt led the way out into the darkness of the night, followed by the three Britons.

Mrs. Willis seized a flaming torch and held it above her head as she stood in the door of the cabin, and thus threw a glare of light over the four men as they stood in the yard.

CHAPTER VII.

AN EXTRAORDINARY FIGHT AND ITS RESULT.

Out in the open air, under the glare of the torchlight held by Mrs. Willis, the four men faced each other.

"Give me your sword, sir," said the captain.

"I beg your pardon," said Burt. "I cannot part with my arms. Your arms are yours. Mine are mine. I yield only to superior force."

"But we are superior force—three to one."

"You are three to one," was the quiet reply, "but that does not make you a superior force. I said I would accompany you back to your post. But I meant as an escort to protect you from——"

"Protect us! Such impudence. Surrender, sir, before I cut you down!"

The irate captain drew his sword threateningly. So did his two brother officers.

"Gentlemen, please don't fight!" cried Mrs. Motte.

Burt drew his heavy sword and stood on the defensive, saying:

"Your blood be on your heads, gentlemen."

"Do you surrender?"

"No—never."

"Have at him, then!"

All three dashed forward at once. Burt never moved an inch. By one tremendous blow he cut one Briton's sword in two. His blade was so much heavier than theirs. The Briton drew a pistol and fired when within three feet of him.

"That was the act of a coward!" cried Mrs. Motte.

In a moment another was disarmed. His sword was caught in a lock and sent flying clear over the cabin. He, too, drew a pistol and fired when within three feet of Burt.

"Coward! Shame!" cried the excited woman in the cabin door.

Burt uttered not a word, but pushed the third one hard, giving him no time to recover from his surprise. He tried to retreat, while the other two were hastily reloading their pistols.

"I'se comin'!" cried a voice, and the next moment black Pomp came whizzing from around the cabin and struck the British captain full in the stomach with his wholly head, doubling him up and forcing a grunt from him that might have been heard two hundred yards away and dropping him all in a heap. He was knocked completely out of time.

"I'se comin', I tole yer!" cried the black again, and the next moment the other officer was knocked helter-skelter and out of time and breath.

"Whoop!" and Pomp made a dash for the third one.

"Hold up, Pomp!" exclaimed Burt.

But he was too late. Pomp took the officer on the side and stretched him at full length on the ground.

"Now, youse lay dar!" he cried, standing over them and shaking his head like a mad bull.

The ladies fairly screamed with laughter.

Burt took up their weapons and then folded his arms and gazed at them.

The captain attempted to rise to his feet. He rose about half way, when Pomp butted him again and down he went like a log. The second one rose.

"Lay down dar, I tole you," cried Pomp, giving him a thump with his head that stretched him out at full length again.

When the third one rose he was confronted by the woolly-headed battering-ram again. He tried to dodge, but in vain. Pomp took him in the stomach and doubled him up like a jack-knife.

The captain seized a stone and essayed to rise again. Pomp settled him by planting his head against his vest and sent him rolling over in the dust.

The ladies screamed with laughter. Burt ordered the Britons to get up on their feet, and Pomp took them up and led them back into the house.

"Are you not wounded?" the captain asked Burt.

"No—not hurt in the least."

"Did not my pistol ball touch you?"

"No."

"Nor mine?" demanded the second one.

"No. I am unhurt."

"You must bear a charmed life," exclaimed the captain.

"I do. No bullet can harm me."

They gazed at him in unbounded amazement.

"What will you do with us?" the captain asked.

"Detain you as prisoners until properly exchanged."

"You can't be induced to let us go?"

"Only on one condition."

"What is that?" he eagerly asked. "I will do anything to get back to my command."

"That you give up the ghost. Then I will give you back to mother earth, but not back to your king."

The officer's face fell. He did not expect such an answer as that.

Mrs. Motte invited them to another game of whist. The captives promptly accepted, hoping that some of the garrison at the fort would come after them. The mortification of their defeat was excruciating in the extreme.

They played several games, but the Britons had no heart in it. Burt and the ladies were merry and had many a hearty laugh at the expense of the prisoners.

At last, at the hour of midnight, Burt arose and said:

"You will have to excuse ladies. We must return to our posts. Come, gentlemen, be kind enough to accompany us out to your horses."

Of course they had to go.

They dared not undertake to resist such a man and such a nigger. They followed him out to their horses. Pomp tied their feet under the bellies of their horses, mounted his own, kissed Mandy good-by and led the three prisoners away through the woods.

Burt led the party out to the main road that led by the Motte mansion. He knew that pickets would be on that road. So, to avoid them, he cut across fields and through woods till he had made the circuit around the farm. On the banks of the river, a mile above the fort, he gave several signals that were answered from the other side. Pretty soon a few scouts came over and then Marion and Lee came over together. The famous partisans were delighted at the capture of the three officers and questioned them about the fort. The prisoners were very guarded in their replies to the questions, showing that they were not as strong at that point as they would have the patriots believe.

Marion ordered the three prisoners to be sent to the rear, and then commenced laying plans for the capture of Fort Motte, as the place was called.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BURNING ARROWS AND CHARMED LIFE—VICTORY.

When daylight came the British commander in the fortified house of Mrs. Motte was astonished to find the place surrounded by Marion and his men. It created consternation at first, but then, being a trained soldier and having better arms than the patriots, he set about to defend the place to the bitter end.

At sunrise Marion demanded the surrender of the fort. Burt bore the flag of truce and made the demand.

The British commander laughed at him.

"You will laugh on the other side of your mouth, sir, before another day passes over your head."

"Get out of my sight, traitor, before I run you through!"

"No dog of a redcoats can run me through," returned Burt.

"Put him out!" roared the officer, "and don't admit any more flags of truce."

"I will see you again to-morrow," said Burt, following the escort out of the presence of the commander of the fort.

When he made his report to Marion that famous leader at once resolved on an assault, as he dared not risk a slow siege.

Rawdon was coming down in that direction, relieved of the presence of Greene since the battle of Hobkirk's Hill, and would probably be there in three or four days.

Mrs. Motte came up on horseback and greeted the little Swamp Fox.

"General," she said, "don't spare my house. The country first, and private good next. If necessary burn down the house. I shall be only too glad of a victory at that expense."

"Ah! That's true patriotism. I salute you, madam!" and Generals Marion and Lee lifted their hats to her.

"You can fire the house by means of burning arrows. The roof is very dry," she said.

"Where can we get a bow?"

"Down at Mrs. Willis'."

Couriers were sent for the bow and arrows.

Mrs. Motte herself prepared the arrows with tar and twine for the torch.

"It will be almost certain death to the man who goes near enough to shoot these arrows," said Marion. "Who will volunteer to do it?"

"I will do it, General," said Burt.

"Heaven protect you!" said Mrs. Motte, as she gave him the bow and arrows.

"Thanks, ma'am," he said, taking the arrows and starting toward the fort. When half way, and when the whole patriot

force was gazing at him, a British sentinel fired at him; he did not stop, though the bullet struck him on the breast and fell at his feet. The next moment he pulled the cord that regulated the working of his helmet. It flew up and inclosed his head, protecting him from all possibility of being hurt.

Suddenly a whole platoon of soldiers fired at him.

The patriots expected to see him fall. But he coolly adjusted the burning arrows, and sent them flying through the air. They fell on the dry shingled roof, and stuck there. Several soldiers climbed up to extinguish the flames. The patriot sharpshooters picked them off, and the fire went on.

Not a single Briton could go on the roof.

The bright flames lit up and burned eagerly.

A sharp fire passed between the two forces for a few minutes and then a white flag was run up.

The patriots yelled themselves hoarse with joy. The enemy surrendered.

"Now put out the fire!" cried Marion.

The patriots set to work with a will, and in a few minutes the fire on the roof was quenched and the main part of the building saved.

Mrs. Motte sent Pomp to the swamps to call out her servants. Many of them were hiding there. They came out, bringing several fat cattle with them. These were slaughtered and a regular barbecue took place.

Burt and the British commander met face to face again.

"Did I not tell you the truth, major?" he asked.

"Yes, but in a very unpleasant manner."

"Not more so than yours was to me."

"But you are not an officer."

"That makes no difference. I am a man, a better man than your king."

The Briton made no reply.

Marion took his prisoners and moved out of the way of Rawdon. He knew that wily commander would pursue him like an enraged tiger the moment he heard of the capture.

That night he was away with his prisoners. Burt, however, remained behind as a scout to watch and report the movements of the enemy. Mrs. Motte insisted that he should stop at her house as her guest as long as he remained in the vicinity. The two young ladies, Misses Willis and Geiger, who witnessed his remarkable conquest of the three British officers on the evening before, thought him the great hero of the war.

Emily Geiger entertained our hero as long as she could, and then had to allow him to seek the sleep he so much needed. He went to a room the hostess assigned him, and lay down to sleep. He never took off a single article of clothing, however, for he knew not at what hour the enemy would pounce down on him.

About daylight a squadron of dragoons rode up to the house. They seemed to be under the impression that it was still a British stronghold, and were surprised at being told that Marion had gobbled up the entire garrison and made off for the swamps with them.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BATTLE OF THE STARS.

The moment the dragoons made their presence known Amanda, the colored girl, ran up to Burt's room and called out through the key-hole:

"De redcoats hab come ergin, sah."

"Eh! What's that?" said Burt, waking up from a sound sleep.

"De redcoats am come!"

"Oh, all right. Much obliged to you. Where's Pomp?"

"Dene gone, sah, wid de horses."

"Good for him. Tell your mistress not to be alarmed."

The girl ran down to deliver the message to her mistress, and found several soldiers breaking into the room occupied by the four ladies.

The ladies screamed at the top of their voices, for they were just awakened from a sound sleep.

Hearing their screams, Burt hurried down to their door. Four redcoats were kicking on the door and hoarsely demanding entrance.

Without uttering a word he cut two of them down before the others were aware of his presence.

Crack! Crack!

The other two drew their dragoon pistols and fired. It was their last shot. The next moment his heavy blade had laid them on the floor.

Here Burt stopped. There were no more redcoats on that floor.

A sergeant, hearing two pistol shots in the house, ran in with four or five dragoons at his heels. Burt, throwing his iron helmet over his head, stood by the door that led to the room occupied by the women.

"Who are you?" demanded the sergeant, recoiling from before such a stalwart form.

"I am the protector of the ladies in this house. Go your way and you will not be harmed."

"Shoot him down, men!" cried the sergeant.

They drew their pistols and fired.

Burt made a dash forward and cut down the sergeant. Then the others fled helter-skelter from the house.

Burt and Pomp then carried the victims' bodies out of the house, and disposed of them, after which they came back and entered the room again.

"Are you hurt, Mr. Burt?" Mrs. Motte asked from within.

"No, ma'am. Don't be uneasy about me."

"Did you kill any of them, Mr. Burt?"

"Well, a few, I believe. Pomp and I disposed of them."

Mrs. Motte came out and gave him her hand.

"If you were here to guard us all the time we would never have any fears of the redcoats."

"I am sure I would like the task, ma'am," he said, bowing his face down to her hand.

Suddenly he started. The clear notes of a cavalry bugle were heard in the distance. They listened.

The ladies turned pale and clung to him for protection.

CHAPTER X.

THE RUNNING FIGHT.

"The dragoons are coming," said Mrs. Motte, pale and trembling. "You must go. They will murder you!"

"Please don't be uneasy, ma'am," said Burt, as he listened to the clear notes of the cavalry bugle. "I will be sure not to place myself in any danger. You may need protection, and I will stay here to give it to you."

"But the whole British army may be coming!" exclaimed Emily Geiger. "You cannot think of contending against such a force."

"I am not going to do that," and he smiled in a very placid way at the young lady.

"Go, then, for the sake of our own dear country."

"No, I will stay for the sake of our dear countrywomen."

"You are so obstinate!"

"That's what the redcoats say of me," and he smiled again in a very pleasant way.

"If you do them as much harm as you did an hour ago, they may burn down the house in revenge," she suggested.

"Maybe they will, but I doubt it. Be quiet and see what the result will be. I may not fight them. On the contrary, I may walk away right before their eyes. If they ask you who I am,

tell them you know not—that I am a mysterious stranger whom the redcoats have tried in vain to kill or capture."

"Yes—yes—we will tell them anything to save you. Go now, while you can do so with safety!"

"Here they come—a whole troop of cavalry!" exclaimed Mrs. Motte.

Burt looked out and saw, following an officer of high rank, fully two hundred dragoons. They stopped at the gate, and several dismounted and came toward the house.

"Now I will go," said Burt. "Don't be uneasy."

He stalked out of the house and started to meet the dragoons, who were coming up from the gate.

"Halt!"

He paid no attention to the demand, but kept on toward the gate.

"Halt, I say!"

No halt.

"Arrest that man!" cried an officer, drawing his sword and pointing it at him.

Two dragoons sprang forward, and, pointing their sword-points at his heart, called out:

"Surrender!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Burt. "Poor fols!" and kept right on, going against their sword-points.

Both the dragoons plunged their swords against his breast. They glanced aside as though he were a man of steel.

Then, as Burt laughed again, they sprang aside, moved by a superstitious fear.

"Lay hold of him!" cried the officer again.

The dragoons dared not disobey. They sprang at him again. He seized them by their coat-collars and dashed their heads together with such force as to cause them to sink down insensible.

"Shoot him! Kill him!" roared the officer, in a towering rage, drawing his own pistol from the holster.

Burt immediately caused the iron helmet to inclose his head, and then kept on his way.

Crack! Crack!

A dozen dragoon bullets were fired at him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Burt. "I love the bullets. They love me and will do me no harm."

"The Bullet Charmer! The Bullet Charmer!" cried the dragoons, recoiling from before the terrible creature of whom they had heard so much.

"Charge!" yelled the captain of a company of dragoons. "Cut him down!" and he made a dash at the patriot scout. Burt drew his sword and knocked him from his horse, as though he was a mere toy. The next mement Burt sprang into the vacant saddle, gave a whoop, and charged right at the whole column.

Two dragoons went down under that heavy blade of his, and then the rest scattered out of its reach. He then dashed down the road at the top of the horse's speed.

Astounded at such deeds, the dragoons glared after him without daring to pursue, till another officer cried out:

"Fifty pounds to the man who brings down that rebel!"

The whole squadron put spurs to their horses and dashed away in pursuit.

Burt had a start of nearly half a mile. He could have dodged into the woods and escaped from sight. But he was waging a war of vengeance on the invaders of his country. He proposed to get his pursuers scattered along the road for a mile or two, and then turn on them.

When he had gone about two miles he looked back and saw the redcoats in a scattered condition. He suddenly wheeled his horse round and dashed back to meet them. The foremost redcoat tried to avoid him, but Burt was too quick for him. His resistance amounted to nothing. A single blow completely

demolished his sword and left him helpless. Another blow and down he went into the dust of the road.

The next man was cut down at full speed. The third man recoiled until two others were alongside of him. All three were cut down. Burt only had to cut. There was no need of his defending himself. His concealed armor did all that for him. When he started on his fourth attack the redcoats turned and fled as though from the presence of the Evil One.

"I won't go any farther," said Burt, stopping the horse, which was a good one; "it's no use. They'll shoot down the horse, and I want to save him to present to Major Horry. Come, old fellow, let's see how you can swim. On the other side of the river there are no redcoats just now, so we'll find it safe enough over there."

He reached the river and the charger plunged boldly in, showing he was used to swimming rivers.

"Ah, you are an old trooper!" said Burt, patting the gallant charger's neck. "I am glad I didn't risk your life by following the dragoons any farther. Hello! There goes somebody leading two horses over! They are a half mile off, but I'll wager my scalp that no redcoats are crossing over. It may be an Indian with stolen horses. I'll try to head him off when I get over. Steady, my boy! Ah! you've struck bottom, have you? All right! Up we go!"

The gallant charger reached the other side of the river without any difficulty.

He rode about a quarter of a mile up the river, and was about to turn back when a voice hailed him with:

"Hello, Marse Nick! Am dat youse?"

"Pomp, as I live!" exclaimed Burt, looking in the direction of the voice. "Did you get away with the horses?"

"Yes, sah; here dey is," and the faithful black, dripping wet, came forth from the thicket with the two horses, a broad grin on his face. "Dem redcoats didn't cotch me, sah!"

"They thought I was a hornet, and let me go," remarked Burt.

"Dat's er fac'," assented Pomp, with a chuckle. "Whar yer git dat hoss, Marse Nick?"

"I took him from a British officer on the other side of the river."

"I know dat hoss," and he walked around the horse.

"You do?"

"Yes, sah, I does. Dat's Marse Major Horry's hoss, he is. He lost him ober a month ago, sah."

"Well, he's a fine horse, and can swim like a duck. The major will be glad to get him again. Come on, let's get away, I want to find General Marion before sunset."

CHAPTER XI.

MAJOR HORRY'S PRESENT.

Burt and Pomp lost no time in getting away from that vicinity. The enemy was moving, and it behooved the patriots to be up and doing. Our hero sprang into the saddle, and sang out to his sable follower:

"Come on, Pomp. We must get ahead of them!"

"Yes, sah, Ise comin'!" replied Pomp, dashing after him at full speed.

Down the river road they went, mile after mile being passed in rapid succession.

Late in the afternoon they struck Marion's scouts, and were led to the lair of the Swamp Fox. Burt told him of the movements of the British on the other side of the river, and steps were taken to strike a blow for the patriot cause.

When Burt was leaving the presence of the Swamp Fox he met Major Horry. The two brave patriots shook hands in silence. Then the scout whispered:

"I have a present for you, major. Come with me."

They walked across the little island swamp and entered a

sort of thicket. Beyond the thicket was another island scarcely a half acre in extent. It was surrounded by an almost impenetrable swamp thicket, and in some places very deep water.

It had not been used for a camp for the reason that the other and larger one was better adapted for that purpose.

On reaching the island they found black Pomp engaged in rubbing down three horses.

"Now, look," said Burt to Horry, pointing to the three horses, "and take your present."

Major Horry looked first at the scout and then at the horses. One of the animals attracted his attention, and he darted forward to look more closely at him.

"By all that's good!" he exclaimed. "It's my Selim! Where did you come from, old fellow?" and the next moment he had his arms around the horse's neck.

"Ah! I knew you would be glad to see him," said the scout. "He is yours, and right glad I am to be able to say so."

"How did you find him?"

"I met him in the road with a redcoat captain in his saddle. The captain is no more, and Selim is here."

"Bless you, Nick! I'd lay down my life for you. If you ever need a friend call on me, and——"

"Oh, I know that. Have you had dinner, Pomp?"

"No, sah," replied the black.

"Come to my quarters, and you can have as many potatoes as you can eat," put in the major. "I managed to get hold of a peck of them last night."

Soon after dark that night Burt and the major were walking on the edge of the island talking in low tones when they heard a signal over by the mainland. The guard on that side answered it.

"One of the scouts is coming in," remarked Horry.

"Yes. He may have news of either Tarleton or Greene."

"I hope so. We'll wait and see who it is."

They did not have to wait long. The signals were well understood, and in some ten or fifteen minutes one of the well-known scouts came in.

"Ah, Bird, how are you?" said Major Horry, grasping the old scout's hand.

"I am well, major," was the scout's reply, as he shook the major's hand. "How are all of you?"

"Well, and spoiling for a fight," was the reply. "Have you any news of Tarleton?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

"On the Wateree."

"Where's Greene and his Continentals?"

"Looking for Tarleton."

"Can he find him?"

"I reckon so, when he wants to. Is the general here?"

"Yes."

"I want to see him."

"Come on; I will show you his quarters."

Burt and the major led the way toward the part of the camp where the Swamp Fox had his quarters. The two scouts were well acquainted with each other. They locked arms and walked on behind the major.

"Have you heard anything of Gaines?" Burt asked of Bird.

"Yes. He is with Tarleton, but his man, Goddard, and a gang of Tories, are down on Sand Creek to-night."

"Where?"

"On the Burnet farm. They are gathering there for a raid somewhere."

"Are you sure Goddard is there?" Burt asked.

"Yes—quite sure."

"Then I must bid you good-by. I want to see Goddard."

"He has a score of men with him."

"I care not if he has a hundred," and Burt turned away to go after his horse.

"Do you want any men with you, Burt?" Horry asked.

"No. I can do my work best by myself."

Burt disappeared in the darkness. He found his horse, put on the saddle, and then led the way out through the swamp to the mainland.

On the mainland he sprang into the saddle.

"Now for vengeance again, my good friend. Carry me through as you have often done, and I will be your friend to the last. It's only ten miles to Burnet's plantation."

He put spurs to his horse and the spirited animal dashed away like a thunderbolt.

The main road led direct to Sand Creek, crossing it about a mile below Burnet's. A settlement road led up the creek to the plantation. Burnet was a rank Tory. So were many of his neighbors. They had committed many outrages on Whigs.

When the creek was reached Burt turned up the creek to go to Burnet's. He was hailed from the roadside by Tory sentinels, who had been placed there by Goddard.

"Halt! Who are you?" a Tory exclaimed.

"I am a recruit going to Burnet's to join Goddard," he replied.

"All right—keep on up the creek."

He moved on and in a little while was in sight of the campfire of the Tories, pitched near a large spring. There were about a score of Tories there.

He dismounted and left his horse free to go at will. Then, throwing up his helmet so as to completely conceal his features, he advanced on foot. The guard halted him. He kept on going straight for the fire around which the main body was sitting.

Bang! went the guard's rifle. He never even noticed him, and in another moment was in the midst of the astonished Tories. He overwhelmed all who stood in his way until he captured the captain himself.

The Tories, like the cowards they were, all fled from before the stern figure of our hero.

On finding himself in the unrelenting grasp of our hero, Captain Goddard turned upon him and asked:

"Why don't you show your face like a man?"

"I never fail to do that when I come in contact with men," he replied.

"I am not a man, then?"

"No; you only have the shape of one. That's all there is of manhood about you."

"Who are you that talk so much about manhood and yet dare not show your face?"

"I am one who has sworn to mete out punishment to you and every man who was with you on a certain night three years ago."

Goddard turned ashen-hued and trembled like a leaf.

"I have killed quite a number of men since that night down on the Pedee three years ago. Of the forty-two men who were there but thirteen now live. You are one of the thirteen. You killed an innocent wife and child that night."

"Are you Nick Burt?" Goddard gasped.

"I am!" was the stern reply.

"We did not know your wife was in the house."

"It would have made no difference if you did. You were fiends. It made a fiend of me."

When Burt rode away half an hour later Goddard's body was hanging to a tree.

Berkeley Place before morning. Its a good fifteen miles from here, but the road is a fine one. There's a company of redcoats there, and my Lord Rawdon is expected there to pay a visit to the old Tory and his daughter. We must get there in time to see the reception. You can make it. Off with you now!"

The gallant charger went like the wind. The cool night air rendered the ride a pleasant one. It took him but a couple of hours to make the distance.

When within a mile of the Berkeley Place, the daring scout saw the campfires of the redcoats that were encamped there. Riding down to the swamp, he dismounted and led his horse into a dense thicket. Taking off his heavy sabre, he hung the belt over the pommel of the saddle, and then strolled out toward the campfires.

It was not quite midnight. The sound of music came from the large, roomy mansion of the rich old Tory, accompanied by pattering feet in an old-fashioned dance.

Burt stopped and listened to the merry sounds for several minutes.

"Ah!" he said, "his lordship is enjoying himself to-night. The Berkeley girls are beautiful, and very rich, which renders them still more attractive. Leila Berkeley is the most beautiful woman on the Pedee, and Rawdon is half in love with her. Dick Ransom is after her, too, and I am after Dick. He went on Rawdon's staff to keep out of my way. But that won't save him. I'll take him from under Rawdon's nose to-night, or Dick Ransom is not his name."

He crept forward, and soon ascertained that a line of sentinels not only extended around the camp, but also around the house where the dancing was going on.

To get into the lines without being seen was a question that received the closest attention. At last he concluded to go boldly up to a sentinel, and claim to be a Tory from over on Sand Creek, come to report the gathering of the friends of the king on the Burnet plantation.

No sooner had he resolved on that plan than he proceeded to put it into execution.

"Halt!" cried the sentry, as he approached.

"I want to see the British commander here," said Burt, coming to a sudden halt. "I am a king's man from over on Sand Creek, and have news for him."

The sentry called out for the corporal of the guard. He came forward, and Burt repeated his story to him.

"Come with me. I'll take you to the captain," the corporal said.

Burt followed him to the headquarters of the camp, and was there shown into the presence of the captain of the guard.

"Who are you?" the captain asked.

"I am John Olin, sir, from the upper waters of Sand Creek."

"You are a king's man?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you anything to communicate?"

"The friends of the king are gathering at Burnet's plantation."

"We know that already."

"But you do not know that the camp was attacked to-night, the men scattered, and Captain Goddard captured and hanged?"

"Zounds! No!" exclaimed the dismayed officer. "Who did it—Marion?"

"No—it was the Bullet Charmer."

"Who is he, and how many men did he have with him?"

"He was alone, sir."

"Alone! How many king's men did Goddard have?"

"Some thirty or forty, I believe," was the reply.

"And one man dispersed them?"

"Yes, sir."

CHAPTER XII.

BURT FACES LORD RAWDON.

"Now, old friend," said Burt to his horse, as they reached the road where it crossed the creek, "we must go over to

The captain looked quizzically at him for a moment or two.

"If I can manage to get hold of those who escaped, I shall see that they are shot for cowardice," he finally said. "I suppose I shall have to send you before his lordship and let you repeat the disgraceful story. Here, sergeant, take charge of this fellow till I see his lordship."

The captain went into the house and found one of Rawdon's staff talking with one of the old Tory's daughters. He whispered to him, and the officer said:

"Bring him into the dining-room, and I will notify his lordship."

The captain saluted and retired.

"Oh, captain!" exclaimed pretty Minnie Berkeley to the staff officer, "you must allow me to go with you! I want to see how you gallant soldiers conduct war. How I wish I was a man that I might fight for my king!"

"I am glad you are not a man, for then I would not be enjoying your company as I am now. You can go in with us, but you will find it very tame and commonplace."

Just then Lord Rawdon came round with the beautiful Leila Berkeley leaning on his arm. The captain informed him in as few words as possible that a king's man from Sand Creek wanted to give him some information, and that he would be in the dining-room in a few minutes.

The British commander bowed and passed on. Leila Berkeley begged permission to be present. Thinking it some trifling bit of news a Tory had to communicate, his lordship granted permission. She soon informed her other lady friends of the fact, and they at once besieged the staff to get permission for them to be present at the interview.

"All of you ladies go in ahead of his lordship," suggested Dick Ransom, the Tory member of the staff. "He won't order you out, and you will see and hear everything."

Of course, that was just the thing for the young ladies. They trooped into the dining-room just as our hero was shown in by the captain of the guard. Even the host himself, old Henry Berkeley, went in and gazed at Nick Burt, whom he had never seen before.

Lord Rawdon came in a few minutes later, and the captain saluted him with:

"This is the fellow, your lordship, who——"

Burt laid a hand on the captain's shoulder, wheeled him around as though he were but a toy figure, and said:

"Tell him this is the gentleman!"

The captain was dazed at being thus treated in the presence of Lord Rawdon.

"Hands off, fellow!" he hissed, "or I'll run you through!"

"Apologize to his lordship for your rudeness or I'll break every bone in your body!"

Several of the ladies screamed, and clung to their escorts.

"Release that man, sir!" said Lord Rawdon sternly.

"Without an apology for his rudeness?" Burt asked.

"I need no apology," the general replied.

"Well, I do. He called me a fellow. If he doesn't apologize I'll throw him through the window."

"If you do I'll have you shot!" exclaimed Rawdon. Crash!

The captain went through the window like a thunderbolt, taking the whole sash with him. Turning to the British commander, Burt folded his arms across his breast and said:

"I am a man. The king himself could not insult me with impunity. Your lordship must know now why the king has so few friends in America. Those who represent him here treat the people like dogs!"

"Arrest that man!" exclaimed Lord Rawdon, in angry tones.

Every member of the staff drew his sword. The ladies screamed with terror. Two of them fainted as they saw the

bright blades flash in the glare of the lamps, and were carried out of the room.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DARING DEED.

Burt folded his arms and stared at the five sabres that were pointed at him.

"Send for the guard and have him taken away!" angrily ordered his lordship.

"My lord, I renounce my allegiance to the king here and now, on account of the conduct of his officers. I defy you! Do your worst."

Rawdon was amazed.

He was white with rage.

"Kill the rebel!" cried one of the staff, making a thrust at him with his sword.

Burt parried the sword with his arm, reached forward, caught him by the collar of his coat, wrenched the weapon from him, threw it out of the window, and said:

"Young man, you have much to learn yet. I spare you on account of the presence of the ladies."

Just then the guard that had been sent for entered the room.

"Come away, ladies," Lord Rawdon said. "He is a brute of a fellow. The guard will attend to him."

"My lord!" cried Captain Ransom, of his lordship's staff, "I know that fellow. He is a rank rebel—a spy!"

"A spy!" echoed a dozen voices at once.

"Yes. He is one of the rebel Marion's scouts. His name is Burt."

"You are right, Dick Ransom!" exclaimed Burt. "I am a patriot. I came here for you."

He made a spring at the staff officer and caught him by the throat. Half a dozen swords struck at once. His helmet flew up and encased his head.

"Ha—ha—ha!" he laughed. "I defy the king's whole army. Have at ye, cowards!"

Lord Rawdon tried to get Leila Berkeley out of the room to prevent her witnessing a scene of violence. But something about the daring stranger held her spellbound.

"No—no, my lord!" she exclaimed, "let me see it all!"

Then the guard undertook to seize Burt. He held on to Ransom with his left hand, seizing the officer's sword with the right, and in a couple of minutes two of the guards staggered away with death-wounds.

"Shoot him down!" cried an officer.

Several pistols were instantly drawn and fired at him.

"Poor fools!" he exclaimed; "I am the Bullet Charmer!"

Then he seized Ransom around the waist and lifted him clear of the floor, and started toward the door.

Half a dozen redcoats charged with the bayonet. They also came within reach of the point of his sword. Just one minute elapsed ere they were glad enough to spring back and give him free passage. Nearly every one of them had his face cut by the point of Burt's sword.

At the threshold Burt gave a defiant shout and darted away in the darkness. When he reached the sentry on guard he was fired on. The bullet took effect in Dick Ransom's shoulder, who gave a cry of pain. Burt never stopped to reply to the shot, but hurried on to the woods.

"Don't carry me any farther," growled Dick Ransom. "I am dying from a musket ball wound."

"I am sorry you are hit, Dick Ransom," Burt said. "I wanted the pleasure of your taking off myself. You know what I came for, I suppose?"

"Yes—yes—I am dying. I would have met you in a fair fight, and let the best man win."

Burt stopped and laid him on the ground. He could tell by his breathing that he was fast going.

When it was known in the Berkeley mansion that Dick Ransom, the dashing young officer, had been literally carried off by the Bullet Charmer, the utmost consternation prevailed.

Lord Rawdon swore like a trooper. That one man should walk into his camp and capture one of his staff was an insult and disgrace that cut him to the quick. He ordered the entire force out to recapture Ransom and take Burt at all hazards.

"One hundred pounds to the man that kills or captures him!" he cried.

The darkness rendered pursuit worse than useless. They had to give up that the most daring thing of the war had been performed. The patriots could now laugh at them and make them the butt of their jokes.

Leila Berkeley asked if any one knew who the daring man was.

"Ransom said his name was Burt," replied a young officer.

"We have heard something about a Bullet Charmer among the rebels," she said, "but we always thought it came from the superstitions of the negroes and poor whites. He certainly seemed to bear a charmed life."

"Undoubtedly," remarked another officer, "for I fired within three feet of his breast. He seemed to have the strength of a giant."

"And talked like a well-bred gentleman, too," she observed. "How I wish we had such men in the king's army."

The officers bit their lips.

They felt the full force of the remarks, for one man had put them all to shame.

That night Leila Berkeley lay awake till near daylight thinking of the extraordinary men she had seen defying the king's whole army, and who had been gallant enough to remind the British commander that ladies were present.

Early the next morning the body of the young staff officer was found, cold and stiff, within a half mile of the Berkeley mansion.

The discovery cast a gloom over the whole British army, not only for the loss of the young man, but the manner of his taking off. They knew nothing of the crime for which he perished, nor would they have cared, for they had no sympathy for the sufferings of the patriots.

At the hour they found the body of Dick Ransom, Nick Burt was riding along the edge of the swamp in search of patriot scouts who could lead him to the camp of the Swamp Fox.

* * * * *

The reader will doubtless remember that when our hero left Marion's camp to go to Sand Creek, Bird, the old scout, was in the Swamp Fox's tent, giving him the news he had picked up in his rambles. Within one hour after that interview the daring patriot general was in the saddle and away, followed by his faithful band. He was on his way to strike a band of Tories and redcoats who were gathering at a spring thirteen miles below his island camp.

When Burt returned he found a scout who told him where Marion was gone, and that only a dozen men remained in camp to guard it.

"I'll go in and get some sleep anyhow," he said, and proceeded to make his way through the swamp to the island. He had no difficulty in reaching it, but the place seemed almost deserted. Only two men were in sight. The others were out in the swamp after game.

The two men he saw were strangers to him, but as he had given the right signals they paid no attention to him. They were busy mending their bridles and talking about the war.

Going to the place where Major Horry had had his quarters, Burt took the saddle off his horse, made a pillow of it, and lay down, resting his head on it.

In ten minutes he was fast asleep.

High noon came and still he slept. Several men came in from the recesses of the swamp, bringing strings of fish and other game. Among them was Pomp, the black servant of Captain Singleton. He had been left behind, having been out on a visit to Mandy, the black maid servant of Mrs. Motte. Like a sensible negro he remained in the camp until he could hear of the whereabouts of his young master, who had been sent away on a secret mission.

The moment he saw Burt's horse he knew the daring scout had returned, and proceeded at once to hunt him up. He found him fast asleep.

"He'll want some brekfus when he wakes up, suah," he muttered, as he looked around, "an' dis chile am gwine fo' to cook it."

Going to the outer side of the island, where the smouldering embers of a camp-fire were still visible, he proceeded to mend it up and then prepare his fish for cooking.

About the time the fish was done brown, Burt woke up and sniffed the odor with an agonizing appetite. Looking around he saw Pomp standing over the pan of fish.

"Black Pomp, as I live!" he exclaimed, rising to his feet. "I am sure of part of his breakfast. I am as hungry as a fasting wolf."

Pomp saw him coming and sang out to him:

"Hyer's yer brekfus, Marse Nick!"

"Did you cook it for me or yourself, Pomp?"

"For youse, Marse Nick," was the reply.

"Why didn't you go out with the boys last night?"

Pomp looked confused and hesitated to reply.

"Ah, Pomp, that girl will be the death of you yet," said Burt, laughing good-naturedly, as he dissected a large perch.

"'Spect she will," assented the sable lover.

"Are the ladies well, Pomp?"

"Yes. Miss Em'ly done gone home down de ribber."

"Is that so? When did she go?"

"Yesterday, sah."

Burt was surprised.

The country was full of roving bands of Tories and redcoats. They were not men to stand on ceremony with an unprotected female.

"What time in the day did she leave?"

"In de mornin' sah."

After eating his fill of the delicious fish, Burt put his saddle on his horse and prepared to mount.

"Whar youse gwine, Marse Nick?" Pomp asked.

"Down the river to Geiger's to see if Miss Emily reached there all right," he replied.

"Golly, massa, lemme go wid youse!"

"Come on."

Pomp bolted his breakfast faster than ever before in his life, and then went for his horse. In a few minutes they were threading their way through the swamp to the mainland, and then put off down the river road at full speed.

The Geiger residence was on the other side of the river, so they had to make for a ford several miles below. When they struck the main road they found that several bands of Tories and redcoats were in the vicinity hastening to join Rawdon, who was coming down in the same direction.

Just as they reached the river they were peremptorily halted by a party of five men.

"Who are you?" Burt asked.

"King's men," was the reply.

"Oh, you are, eh? Well, what are you doing here without the king's uniform on?"

"We are not mustered into the service."

"You are very poor king's men, then. If I owned a master I would wear his collar, as every dog does."

"By the king's crown, you are impudent enough to be the king's jester!" cried one of the men. "Who are you, and where are you going?"

"I am a patriot—one of Marion's men. What are you going to do about it?"

"We'll show you!" replied one of the Tories, leveling his rifle at his breast. "Get down, or you'll tumble to the ground with a hole through you."

"Oh, don't shoot me! I'll get down!"

"I thought you would," and the five Tories laughed and chuckled as he alighted.

"Give me your sword," said one.

"Your rifle," said another.

"Here it is," he said, drawing his heavy sabre. But instead of handing it over to him he gave it a sudden whirl over his head and brought it down with such force on the neck of the one who had demanded it that it completely knocked him out. Another flash and another was down.

Crack! went a rifle within three feet of his breast.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed, as he seized the man and disarmed him. "This is fun! You are king's men, are you? Here, Pomp, hold this fellow till I catch the others!"

"Yes, sah!" and Pomp sprang off his horse to obey.

The other two men fired point blank at the scout, and their bullets fell harmless at his feet.

Burt sprang at one of them and caught him. The other one took to his heels, and made his escape through the woods.

The one Pomp seized was a very muscular and pugnacious individual. He drew his pistol which Burt had not seen, and was about to shoot Pomp, when the latter ran at him, butting him into a cocked-hat condition.

The pistol exploded, sending the bullet wide of its mark and doing no harm whatever.

"How youse like dat?" asked Pomp. "What fo' youse want er shoot er nigger, eh? Gime dat pistil."

He reached for this pistol and got it. Then he reached for another and found it.

"Now give him a few of your best butts, Pomp," said Burt.

"Yes, sah," replied Pomp; "stan' up hyer, sah!" and he raised the Tory to his feet. The Tory squared himself to give the woolly head a reception if it came within his reach again.

Pomp knew that his head was harder than any man's fist that was ever made, so he paid no attention to his attitude.

He ran forward with all his force. The Tory struck out. His fist came in contact with the woolly-headed battering-ram.

The head was not hurt, but the fist was ruined!

"He, he, he!" chuckled Pomp. "Look out, dar! I'se comin'."

He struck him full in the breast. The Tory went to grass like a log, and in three minutes was dead. He never caught his wind again.

CHAPTER XIV.

CAPTURED AND RESCUED.

"That settles him, Pomp," said Burt. "Try your head on this one."

"Shoot me! Let me die like a soldier."

"You die like a soldier! Why, you haven't a single instinct of a soldier. You have only robbed, burned and shot down men from behind trees and rocks." Oh, no. I ought to have a big billy-goat along with me just to butt you rascals to death with."

"Turn 'im loose, Marse Nick," said Pomp. "Dis yer chile am de wute' ole goat what ober libed. Ba-a-a-a!"

Burt laughed till he was almost in convulsions at Pomp's antics.

He heard a thump, and on looking around saw the Tory lying on the ground gasping and trying to get his wind.

"Come on, now; we must get on the other side of the river."

Burt stopped and looked around. He could see no one. The river was wide and shallow at that point, the water not coming up to the stirrups.

On the other side they were startled by a call to "Halt!"

Burt stopped and looked around. He could see no one. The bushes on either side of the road rendered concealment an easy matter.

"Well, I am halted," he said. "What do you want?"

"I want you!"

"Come and take me, then."

"Get down and throw your arms on the ground."

Burt did as he was told, giving Pomp a knowing wink as he did so.

Pomp sat still as a statue on his horse, waiting for the next move.

Burt laid down his sword and rifle as he was ordered, and then stood still, looking toward the bushes.

"Now come into the bushes," commanded the voice again.

He promptly obeyed.

"Say, you nigger! Bring the horses along, and be quick about it, or you'll be a dead un before you know it. Do yer hear?"

"Yes, sah."

Pomp promptly leaped to the ground, took up the sword and gun of the scout, and then followed him into the bushes.

Here he saw a man with a gun leveled at Burt. The man had a hard, determined look about him that meant business.

"Now march, both of you," the man ordered.

"Which way?" Burt asked, good-naturedly.

"Straight ahead."

The Tory marched them about a quarter of a mile into the depths of the forest. There they saw a small camp of about a score of men and a half dozen women, mostly wives of Tories, who had followed their husbands to camp for safety.

As Burt entered the camp, the men sprang up and gazed at him, as if to see if he was one they had seen before. He glanced around, and among the women beheld the tearful face of Emily Geiger, the friend of Mrs. Motte. She recognized him at the same moment, and, with a cry, sprang to her feet. He gave her a look that warned her not to recognize him just yet.

"Sit down!" said one of the women, angrily. "What ails you, anyhow? One 'ud think 'ye knowed 'im."

She sank down on the bit of wood that served as a seat, and riveted her gaze on the scout. When she looked at Pomp she detected a grin on his ebony face that reassured her. The color played over her peachy cheeks again, and her eyes sparkled as before.

"Who is he?" a half dozen Tories asked at once of the captor.

"Don't know. Who are you?"

"My name is Greene," was his quiet reply.

"Greene—Greene. You don't live in South Carolina?"

"No. I was recently sent down here from Virginia."

"Who sent you and what were you sent for?"

"I was sent by General Washington to take command of the American troops in the——"

"General Greene!" yelled every man in the little camp.

"Yes—I am General Greene."

"Great Caesar!" gasped one of the men. "What a haul! Our fortune is made! Lord Rawdon will give ten thousand pounds for him."

"He would give more than that, I think," Burt suggested.

"By the king's crown! we must tie him and take him to Rawdon this very night!"

"Yes, tie him so he can't give us any trouble."

They came around with cords to tie him. He beckoned to Pomp, and that grinning imp walked up to his side. Burt snatched the great heavy sword Pomp was carrying under his arm.

"I will not be bound like a dog!" he said.

"Oh, you won't, eh?" exclaimed the leader of the Tories, drawing a pistol and aiming it at his breast. "Just drop that sword or I'll make a hole through you!"

Burt strutted toward him. The Tory retreated. They didn't want to kill such a prisoner as they supposed him to be.

"Rush on him and knock him down!" the leader cried.

Half a dozen men rushed on him. In an instant his iron helmet encased his head and the work of death commenced. His work with the sword was so destructive that the survivors fled in dismay.

The moment the Tories fled howling to the woods, Emily Geiger clapped her hands with glee, crying out in joyous accents.

"Victory! victory! I am free again!"

The Tory women were utterly amazed at the sudden turning of the tables. That one man should be able to disperse the whole camp seemed like a dream to them. It took them several minutes to comprehend what had taken place. Then, when they did, they set up a heartrending wailing that was painful to her. Two of them had lost their husbands, killed outright, while two more had seen theirs stagger away from wounds.

"Be quiet, ladies," Burt said. "I am not a Tory. They make war on helpless women and children. We do not. You are free to go where you please. Miss Geiger, how came you here?"

"I was returning home yesterday," she replied, "and those men stopped me."

"And they kept you here all night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Were these ladies kind to you?"

"Only one of them spoke a kind word to me—that one over there."

She pointed to one who was seated on the ground, rocking to and fro, moaning in an agony of distress.

"What's the matter with her now?"

"That man over there," pointing to one of the dead Tories, "was her husband."

"I am sorry for her. Tell her you sympathize with her, and then come on. You must mount your horse once more and make an effort to get home."

Emily went to the weeping woman and put her arms around her. Two of the others turned savagely on her with:

"Let her alone. She doesn't want any sympathy from you. You have brought all this trouble on us."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," said Burt. "Your men folks brought it all on themselves. Had they been true to their country this would not have been."

"They were true to their king, sir!" retorted one of the women, her eyes flashing fire.

"The king is simply a man, and a very poor specimen of manhood at that, who will die in the course of time. The country will endure to the end of time. The king is the enemy of this country, therefore it's the duty of every man in America to fight the soldiers of King George, wherever he finds them. Now you may return to your homes if you have any. Come, Miss Geiger, I will see you to your home."

Emily Geiger ran to him and put her hand in his, saying:

"Pomp, hunt for Miss Geiger's horse."

"Yes, sah. Heah he is, sah."

Pomp led the horse out from among a dozen others.

"Yes, that's him," she said.

Burt assisted her into the saddle, and then mounted his own, as did Pomp, and the party moved off toward the big road.

"Where were you going?" she asked after a ride of several minutes.

"I was going to your house. Pomp told me this morning that you had gone home alone. I knew it was a dangerous thing to do, so I set out to go and see if you had reached home safely. I am very glad I did so."

"How kind of you!"

"Miss Geiger, you cannot imagine how much I sympathize with the unprotected ladies of our country in this cruel war. I know how cruel the king's men are toward the families of the patriots. My wife and child were killed by them three years ago."

"That was horrible! I wonder you ever spare one of them in battle."

"I seldom do, I assure you," was the quiet reply. "Mine is a mission of vengeance."

"I don't blame you. How I wish I could go with and help you!"

"Halt! Who goes there?" cried a voice in the bushes on the roadside.

"A lady and her escort," was the prompt reply of the scout.

"Where from?"

"Up the river?"

"Where to?"

"Her home, six miles beyond here."

"You must dismount and come in——"

Burt instantly set his helmet over his head and said firmly:

"Come out and show yourself. I shall not leave the lady."

"I will fire if you do not."

"You can fire as much as you like, but must take the consequences!"

He heard the unknown cocking his gun.

"Ride on a little pace," said Burt to Miss Geiger.

She did so.

"Halt!" came again in stern tones, and she halted.

Burt dismounted quickly and darted into the bushes.

The next moment the sound of a scuffle was heard, a groan, a blow and then all was still.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FATE OF NEIL BADGER.

The silence that followed the collision in the bushes was a very painful one to Emily Geiger. She was nervous, fearing she was destined again to fall into the hands of the hated Tories.

Turning to Pomp, she asked:

"What can be the matter? Why does he not return? Can they have killed him?"

"No, honey, dey can't!" was the black's emphatic reply.

"Why does he not return, then?"

"Wait, honey. Marse Nick is er bad un wid dem Tories," and Pomp shook his head in a manner that displayed unbounded faith in the prestige of the Bullet Charmer.

Just then Burt came out of the bushes unhurt, but with a strange look on his face.

"What's the matter, Mr. Burt?" Emily asked. "Are you hurt?"

"Not in the least. I found documents on him that will have an important bearing on the movements of the two armies in this section. We must hasten to your home, Miss Geiger, as it is growing dark. I must try to see General Greene by sunrise to-morrow."

"We can soon reach there. It's only a few miles from here, and the road is good."

"Come on, then," and he led the way at a brisk pace. She rode by his side, with Pomp bringing up the rear.

They rode for several minutes in profound silence. He was thinking of the important papers he had found on the person of the man he killed in the bushes, as well as the mission of vengeance he was on.

"Do you think we will be interrupted again before we get home, Mr. Burt?" she asked, after a long pause.

"We may. There is no telling what may happen in these times."

"I didn't know there were so many roving bands in this part of the country."

"The scenes of war shift from one section to another, and the partisan bands move with the great armies sometimes."

"Do you know where the Continental army is?"

"I do not. It is on the move since the affair at Hobkirk's Hill. Just where it is now I do not know."

A long silence followed.

Both seemed wrapt in meditation. Suddenly she asked:

"Mr. Burt, do you really believe the Colonies will gain their independence?"

"I do with all my soul. I have never once doubted our ultimate success."

"I am so glad to hear you say that," she said, "for it gives me so much hope for the future. We are almost home now. That light yonder is in one of the negro cabins."

"Yes, I know the place well," he remarked. "Are you tired from your ride?"

"Oh, no, sir. You have made it so pleasant for me that I have not counted the miles. Shall we see you again, Mr. Burt?"

"I hope so."

"Will you come in and see my parents?"

"Yes, with pleasure, for a few moments. I want to see that you are safe under their protection."

He dismounted at the gate and assisted her to alight.

Two huge dogs rushed out from under the house, barking and growling as if they would tear them to pieces.

Emily spoke to them.

They knew her voice and instantly obeyed her.

The next moment her father and an old man servant came to see who they were.

"It's me, father!" cried Emily.

"Emily! Emily! my child!" cried the mother on hearing her voice, rushing past the old man and darting out into the yard to meet her. "They told me the Tories had captured you and carried you away!"

"They did capture me, mother," Emily said. "I was a prisoner a day and a night, till this gentleman—Mr. Burt—came and rescued me."

"May Heaven bless you, sir," cried the mother, grasping his hand. "A mother's blessing shall go with you all your life."

"Why, it's our Emily!" exclaimed her father, coming from the house more leisurely than the mother had done. "Why, how did you get away from the Tories, daughter?"

"Mr. Burt rescued me, father. Here he is. One of the bravest soldiers under Marion."

The two men shook hands in silence, for they both understood each other.

"Come in, sir, and have supper with us."

"Under such circumstances I will join you with pleasure," replied Burt, "and then I must away on important business."

"We will not detain you long, sir," the old man said as he led the way into the house.

Burt and Pomp had a splendid meal, after which they decided to proceed on their way.

Burt called for Pomp, and was about to mount, when the sound of horses' feet in the road above came to his ears. He stopped and listened.

"That is a scout," he said to Emily Geiger, who had accom-

panied him out to the gate. "I will wait and see who he is and what news he has."

The newcomer drew nearer each minute. Burt and the Geiger family remained at the gate, intending to stop him and ask for the news.

He came up, and stopped without being hailed, and asked if he was on the right road to the river.

Burt knew the voice.

"Yes, Joel, you are on the right road," he answered. "But why are you in such a hurry?"

"Thunder! Is that you, Nick Burt?" the scout answered back, in the greatest surprise.

"Yes. What's the news?"

"Come here and I'll tell you."

Burt went up to him.

"Greene and his army are in full retreat from before Ninety-six. The general himself will be along here by daylight."

"Was he defeated in battle?"

"No, the rapid approach of Rawdon with superior numbers compelled him to raise the siege and get out of the way."

"The army is not discouraged then?"

"Oh, no; nothing to be discouraged about. If Greene had one thousand more men with him he could whip Rawdon out of his boots."

"Then he ought to have them. Where's Sumter?"

"Over on the Santee somewhere, I believe."

"He must be found. I was on the eve of going in search of General Greene, but now I will wait here for him."

"I must go on," said Joel. "Tell the general you have seen me, and that everything is all right so far."

"I will—good-night."

Joel dashed away toward the river, and our hero returned to the house with the Geiger family.

Mrs. Geiger was all in a flutter about the coming of the Continentals. She wanted to see General Greene, and have him eat a breakfast under her roof.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GIRL VOLUNTEER.

They instantly offered him the best bed in the house.

"Indeed, I could not sleep anywhere but outdoors under a tree," he said. "All of you go to bed, and Pomp and I will guard you as well as if a thousand men were around."

They did so, and soon after a profound quiet reigned about the place. Burt and Pomp were out in the woods on the roadside, one on guard while the other slept.

Soon after midnight a company of patriot horse came by. Burt knew them from words spoken by many of them as they passed. Then came a regiment of Continentals. He knew them by their regular marching, their faded uniforms, and the character of their arms. Several other regiments passed, and Burt began to look out for General Greene and his staff. An officer came dashing by at full speed.

"That's a staff officer," he said. "Come on, Pomp."

He went in pursuit of the staff officer, and soon caught up with him.

"Where is General Greene?" he asked.

"About a half mile back. Who are you?"

"I am a scout. I want to report to him."

"Come with me, then; I will take you to him."

Burt turned back and went with the young officer, and in a little while they met the general and his staff.

"General," said Burt, saluting the commander, "I have important papers for you to peruse."

"Who are you?" the general asked, not being able to recognize him in the dark.

Burt leaned forward and whispered his name in his ear. The effect was electrical.

"Yes," said the general, "give me the papers. Bring a light at once!"

"General, a patriot family, a little distance ahead, expects you and your staff to eat a meal under their roof. You will find lights and other conveniences there that cannot be had here in the woods."

"Yes, we will go there," the general said. "Lead the way, please."

Burt led the way to the house. The commander and staff followed. They found the Geiger family up, the tramp of the passing regiment having awakened them.

The family received the commander with demonstrations of joy.

A servant showed him to a private room, in which the two—he and Burt—were closeted for nearly an hour.

When they came out the general had a happy expression on his face. He instantly dispatched his officers to stop the march of the army at the river. They mounted their horses and sped away at the top of their speed. In an hour the army was stopped and a camp pitched.

Just as the sun was peeping over the hills, the gallant general and his staff sat down to the sumptuous breakfast Mrs. Geiger had prepared for them.

The meal over, the general took Burt aside and said:

"I want Marion, Lee and Sumter to join me. Do you think you can find them?"

"I do."

"Which one can you reach first?"

"Marion, I think."

"Go, then, and tell him if he will join me at once, we can strike a blow that will drive the enemy from the Carolinas."

"Where shall he join you?"

"Anywhere. Tell him to come to the river and follow me till we meet. I will send someone else to Sumter."

Burt had eaten heartily, and was soon ready to mount, Pomp was equally as prompt with the horses. In five minutes they were off.

Scarcely had they passed the lines, when General Greene called for volunteers to go to Sumter and Lee. The officers cast about for scouts to go on the dangerous errands, but did not find any. The whole country was full of Tories and red-coats, who were killing and hanging every patriot they could catch. Only a few scouts were in, and they were men of very great caution.

Two hours later no scout had been found who was willing to carry an order to Sumter. General Greene was talking to one of his generals when a staff officer reported the failure to find anyone willing to go.

"Is it possible that there is no one in my army who is willing to risk his life for his country?"

"I will go, general!" exclaimed a feminine voice.

Everyone turned to face the speaker.

It was Emily Geiger!

"You, my child!" the brave old soldier exclaimed, as the pretty face was turned to him.

"Yes, general. While it would be death to a soldier, it would not be to me."

General Greene looked at the bright young face, and tears came into his eyes.

"My child," he said, "your country will remember you with devotion! I will write a letter to be given to Sumter, and then give you a verbal message."

He retired to the little room where he and Burt had conferred, and wrote a few lines to be given to the Game Cock, as Sumter was called.

When he had finished, he came out and found Emily ready

on a fleet horse waiting for him. He gave her the letter and said:

"Tell him to join me at once with all the men he can raise."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, if you can't deliver the letter, destroy it. May Heaven bless and protect you!"

She turned her horse's head and rode away.

Crossing the river, she pushed on toward the high hills of the Santee, having been informed that the Game Cock was somewhere in that direction.

She rode all the afternoon, meeting with a few Tories, also some roving bands of Whigs, from whom she learned the whereabouts of Sumter and his men. He was still many miles away, but she pushed on, and as the shades of night gathered about her, depended upon the sagacity of her horse to keep her in the road.

It soon grew terribly dark. Where the tall trees overhung the road she could not see her hand before her face. Yet such was her indomitable pluck that she kept on, knowing that some one of the patriots scouts would halt her if she passed anywhere near them.

Suddenly she heard a stern, manly voice sing out:

"Halt! Who comes there!"

"Thank goodness!" she exclaimed, in tones of relief. "Come and help me down!"

CHAPTER XVII.

AT MORRIS' CORNER.

On leaving the headquarters of the Continental army, Burt made his way up the river in search of the Swamp Fox. He knew that Marion was lying in wait up there for some of the many roving bands of Tories, and that he could easily be found.

That evening he met with one of Marion's scouts, who told him where the Swamp Fox could be found. He pushed on, and late in the night found the camp.

General Marion was preparing to move at daylight on a special mission, when Burt was shown to his quarters.

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"General," he said, "the commander of the Continental army in the Carolinas has sent me to ask you to join him with your men as soon as you can, to strike a blow at Rawdon. Rawdon came up and he had to retire. He has sent for Sumter. If both of you together can bring him a thousand men he can overwhelm and crush Rawdon."

"Tell General Greene that I will join him immediately with all the men I can get together."

Burt saluted and retired from the presence of the famous partisan.

Pomp sought Major Horry, to inquire if his young master had returned yet. He found he had not, and so concluded to remain with Burt until he saw him again.

"Did you kill any Tories?" asked the major.

"Well, a few."

"Good! They are not worth capturing."

"Just my opinion, too, but the general thinks differently, and that alters the case, you know."

Burt concluded to sleep at the major's quarters, which was nothing more than a big live-oak tree, and take an early start on the morrow. Pomp slept and snored near the horses, in order to be ready at a moment's notice.

Early the next morning they were up and away without waiting even to get breakfast.

"We must pick up a breakfast on the road, Pomp," he said,

as they trotted vigorously along the road under the gray dawn of a coming morn.

"Reckon dere ain't no breckfusses layin' round loose in de road!" remarked Pomp, who didn't much like starting for a whole day's ride on an empty stomach.

"Oh, we'll stop at some house and buy a breakfast."

When they rode a few miles further, Pomp discovered that they were nearing the residence of the old Tory Berkeley.

"Youse won't git no brekfus dar, Marse Nick," he said, shaking his head.

"Wait and see, Pomp."

"Yes, sah; but it's awful hungry I am."

"So am I; but we'll get a good breakfast."

They rode up to the gate, where Burt dismounted and entered the yard. A huge dog flew at him, as if he would tear him to pieces. He never noticed the brute, a fact that seemed to make the dog ashamed of himself, for he turned and slunk off, as though disgusted with himself.

At the door he was met by old Berkeley himself, who responded gruffly to his cordial good-morning, and asked:

"What do you want, sir?"

"I want a breakfast for myself and servant, for which I will pay in English gold."

"Are you a king's man?"

"No, sir."

Just then Leila Berkeley, the old Tory's beautiful daughter, came to the door. Her eyes met his and all the color left her face for a moment. She pressed a hand over her heart, as if to still its wild throbbing, and leaned heavily against the door.

Burt bowed gracefully to her, removing his hat and displaying a broad, expansive brow.

"I have had the honor of seeing the lady before," he said. "I honor beauty and virtue always."

"Papa," said Leila, turning to her father, "this is the soldier who paid us a visit the night Lord Rawdon honored us with his presence."

"Eh? What?" gasped the old Tory, turning deathly pale and staggering back against the door.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BURT MAKES A FAIR CONVERT.

Burt smiled as he noticed the terror of the arrogant old Tory plainly portrayed in his face.

"Don't be troubled, father," said Leila, "so brave a man can never be other than a gentleman."

"Thanks, lady, for your good opinion," said Burt, bowing again. "Your people have nothing to fear from me. I have been in the saddle all night, and am very hungry. I wish to purchase a breakfast for myself and servant."

"You shall have the best breakfast we can prepare for you, sir," said Leila, with considerable spirit. "Come in, sir, and be seated; I will give the order for your breakfast."

"Thanks for your kindness, lady. How merciful is your sex!"

Leila left the room to order the servants to prepare a hot breakfast as quickly as possible. She informed her mother and sisters who the visitor was. The two younger sisters went into the room and were introduced by Leila. Burt was courtly in his manners, looking more like a lord, and more manly than any British lord they had ever seen.

"This war is a terrible one, Mr. Berkeley," he remarked to the old Tory, hoping to make him feel easy in regard to himself.

"Yes; a cruel war!" assented the old man, regaining his confidence as he saw that no violence was intended.

"Breckfuss is ready," said the black cook, in a short while, putting her turbaned head in at the dining-room door.

"Will you walk in, sir?" Leila asked.

Burt sprang up and offered her his arm. She accepted it, and thus they entered the dining-room. The two sisters, though they had already eaten, went in and sat at the table with them. Leila poured the coffee and passed the cream and sugar, serving as hostess, while the two younger sisters looked on.

"I hope no unpleasant relations will arise on account of your fine reception of us, fair lady," said Burt, looking admiringly at the fair hostess.

"I do not fear any, sir," she said.

"Ah! I like your spirit."

"I have a will of my own," and she tossed her head to give emphasis to her words.

"Marse Nick!" cried Pomp, bursting into the room, "de redcoats am er comin'!"

The three ladies sprang to their feet, screaming.

"Fly—fly for your life!" said Leila, turning to our hero.

"Please don't be disturbed, ladies," he said, sipping his coffee. "I have not finished my meal yet."

"But you will be killed, dear sir!" pleaded Leila Berkeley.

"Indeed I will not. How many were there, Pomp?"

"Seven ob dem."

"Is that all? A body of scouts, perhaps. Look after the horses, and I'll attend to the redcoats."

Pomp went out of the house and returned to the horses, which he quickly got out of the way.

Leila Berkeley resumed her seat at the table, but her two younger sisters ran out on the porch in front of the house to look at the redcoats. Sure enough, there were seven redcoat scouts, under command of a lieutenant, who had several times shared the hospitality of the Berkeley family. They rode up to the gate and the young officer saluted the two ladies.

Alice Berkeley ran out to the gate and exclaimed:

"Oh, lieutenant, please don't stop now. That awful man who killed Captain Ransom is in the house. If you stop there will be a fight, which would frighten mother to death!"

"Oh, Miss Alice!" he exclaimed, his face lighting up with joy, "don't ask me to go! The capture of that man would make me a colonel at the least. We can capture him without any trouble."

"You will all be killed!"

"Tut, tut! One rebel kill seven British soldiers? Dismount, men."

The men dismounted, having carbines as well as sabres.

"Follow me!"

The young officer led the way into the house.

Alice and her sister ran screaming across the yard toward one of the negro cabins.

The tramp of heavy-booted men in the house caused Leila Berkeley to turn pale.

"Don't be troubled, fair lady," said Burt.

The young officer led the way into the dining-room, followed by his six men.

"Surrender, sir!" he thundered, on seeing our hero quietly eating his breakfast.

"Ah, lieutenant!" exclaimed Burt, "is it you. Sit down and have some breakfast. We'll talk about war afterward. A lady is present, you see."

"Business first, sir! Do you surrender?"

"I have always noticed that British officers are singularly lacking in true politeness and consideration for your sex, Miss Berkeley. If you will be so kind as to leave this room for a few—"

"No, no, you shall not fight here!" she cried, throwing herself in front of Burt. "Kill me, if you will, but not him!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FIGHT AT BERKELEY'S.

The sudden movement of Leila Berkeley in throwing herself between the Bullet Charmer and the redcoats astonished him as much as it did the young officer. Both stared at her in unfeigned surprise without either uttering a word for several minutes. The soldiers looked first at her and then at the young lieutenant, as if waiting for further orders.

At last the young officer spoke to her:

"Miss Berkeley, you are interfering with the king's soldiers in the discharge of their duty.

"I am only trying to save the life of a brave man and prevent bloodshed in my father's house," she quickly replied.

"Fair lady," said Burt, "my life is in no danger whatever. You are laboring under a great mistake, though my heart pleasantly flutters under the inspiration of such sweet protection."

"You will not harm him?" she asked, turning to the young redcoat officer.

"No, not unless he resists. As he is a rebel, we are bound to kill or capture him."

"Of course, that is your duty, sir," put in Burt. "As you are enemies of my country, I am bound either to kill or capture you, am I not?"

"If you can," assented the young officer.

"Of course. For the sake of this young lady and her family, I propose that we adjourn to the yard in front of the house and there settle the question as to who shall be killed or made prisoner."

"Agreed!"

Burt stalked out of the house. The young officer and his men followed him.

The old Tory and his family, expecting a death-struggle every moment, had locked themselves up in another room, that they might not be witnesses of it.

But Leila Berkeley was of different stuff. She ran out on the porch where she could see and hear all that was done or said.

Out in the yard Burt refused to surrender.

The six redcoats sprang at him.

In just three seconds two of the dragoons were down.

Click! and the iron helmet of his concealed armor encased Burt's head.

"Down with the king!" he cried, and another one went down.

The young officer, alarmed at the terrible nature of his resistance, seized a carbine which had fallen from the lifeless grasp of one of his men, and aimed directly at his heart. Leila Berkeley saw him taking aim and uttered a piercing scream. The next moment a dark object shot from around the corner of the house and struck the lieutenant on his right side, sending him rolling on the grass full twenty feet away.

It was Pomp, and his woolly head had knocked all the breath out of the Briton for several minutes to come.

"Whoop!" yelled the black. "Look out dar! I'se ercomin'."

He bent his black battering-ram forward and made another plunge. A redcoat was struck full in the back. The spinal column broke and the dragoon went down to rise no more.

"Ha—ha—ha!" laughed Burt, as he found himself confronted by only one dragoon. "Only one left out of seven!"

The dragoon looked around him in dismay. He was the only one of his party on foot. The others were down. He raised his carbine to his shoulder, took a deliberate aim at the terrible rebel and fired. The next moment Pomp struck him and sent him sprawling on the ground.

"Victory! Victory!" cried Leila Berkeley, springing off the porch and running to our hero. She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. Then, as if ashamed at what her

enthusiasm had led her to do, she fled into the house, and shut herself up in her room.

"Make them surrender to you, Pomp," Burt said, going forward and taking a seat in the porch.

Mr. Berkeley, who had seen the affair from a window of the room in which he had locked himself and family, came out and said:

"Sir, you are not human. No mere man can do what you have just done. Who are you?"

"I am simply Nick Burt, sir. A man who has taken precautions to guard himself against bullets and blades till his mission of vengeance is finished."

"Youse hab better surrender, sah!" they heard Pomp say to the young British officer, who was now trying to rise to his feet.

"Where's your master?" the officer asked, looking around at his men lying where they had fallen.

"Dar he is," said Pomp, pointing toward the porch, where Burt was sitting. "But youse my prisoner, sah. Gimme dat sword."

"Surrender to you!"

"Yes, sah. Dat was me what knocked youse down."

The redcoat attempted to draw his sword. Pomp plunged forward and butted him in the stomach, sending him to grass, knocking him senseless.

Just then another one of the dragoons rose to his feet, the only one able to do so. Pomp started toward him. The dragoon cried out:

"Quarter! I surrender!"

"Dat's er fac'," said Pomp. "Got mo' sense dan yer hossifer."

Pomp took the dragoon's sword and laid it at Burt's feet.

"Your other prisoner is coming up, Pomp," said Burt, looking toward the young lieutenant. Pomp ran toward him and demanded his sword in token of surrender.

"I will surrender to your master, not to a slave," replied the proud young Briton.

"Look heah!" exclaimed Pomp, "gimme dat sword afore I butt de insides outen youse!"

"Why do you subject me to this indignity?" the young officer asked of Burt.

"Because a man who will let another whip seven of him has no right to expect anything better," was the reply.

"It's a shame," said the old Tory, Berkeley.

"My dear sir, not being a soldier, you have nothing to do with it. It will learn him a lesson he will never forget. Surrender to the negro, or take the consequences."

The lieutenant flung the sword down at the feet of the black conqueror, and then staggered toward the house.

Pomp picked up the weapon and handed it to Burt.

"Keep it, Pomp. You have won it. I wish I had a regiment of battering-rams like you."

"I am very sick," said the young officer, looking up at old Berkeley.

"Come in, then, and lie down," said the host, taking him by the arm.

"I am sorry for you, sir," Burt remarked, assisting him on the other side, "but it's the fortune of war."

"Yes; I am ruined. I wish to God I could die now."

"I would say 'amen to that wish, sir, if you included in it all the king's soldiers in America," Burt said, "but for one only I will not. I shall take your parole and leave you here in charge of Mr. Berkeley. Will you give it?"

"Yes"

Burt wrote out the parole, and the young officer signed it for himself and the one private who survived the contest.

Then Burt bowed himself out of the house, and, with faithful Pomp by his side, mounted his horse and rode away.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TORY'S DAUGHTER—BRENT HOLMES.

When Burt was gone Alice Berkeley ran into her sister Leila's room and exclaimed:

"Oh, Leila, he has gone away and left the lieutenant here on parole!"

"Who has gone?"

"That awful rebel."

"Gone! and not said good-by to me!" and the proud beauty buried her face in her hands and sobbed.

A servant opened the door and rushed in, saying:

"He's come back! Oh, de good Lor' sabe us! He's done come back!"

Leila sprang up and ran out of the room. In the corridor she met her father, who said to her:

"Burt has returned and wishes to see you."

"Me, father?"

"Yes, he asked for you."

She ran back into her room, and rearranged her hair and dress, and then went into the reception-room.

"Fair lady," Burt said, rising as she entered the room, "I committed an almost unpardonable sin in leaving without paying my respects to you. Pardon me; it was not intentional. Under the circumstances I forgot my duty."

"I was grieved when I heard you were gone, sir," she replied. "And I am glad you returned. I fear I shall need much sympathy, now that I have declared against the king."

"You shall have all the sympathy my heart can give, fair lady."

"Do you not know my name?" she quickly asked, noticing that he called her fair lady every time he addressed her.

"I know that you are Miss Berkeley," he said.

"I am Leila, the eldest daughter."

"Thanks. I shall never forget the name nor its owner."

"If you are in this part of the State, you will call on us again?"

"Certainly; but I hope I shall not be the means of bringing strife with me as I did to-day."

"I hope the war will soon be over."

"So do I. I will go now. Good-by."

He extended his hand to her, and she took it, or rather laid hers in it.

"Good-by! May Heaven protect you in the perils that surround you!"

"Amen!"

He pressed her hand to his lips, and turned away without another word. She gazed after him as long as he could be seen, and then retired to the privacy of her own room, murmuring:

"Oh, if he loves me I shall be the happiest woman that ever lived!"

Burt rejoined Pomp, and hastened down the river to see the patriot forces gather for the coming struggle.

On the way down he was cautious and politic. There were many men in small bands moving to and fro who were suspicious of any and everybody.

At one place, seeing half a dozen Tories approaching, he arranged his helmet so as to conceal his features.

On being told they were king's men, Burt with his clenched hand knocked their audacious Tory leader from his horse.

The others charged on him, firing their pistols as they came. He drew his sword, and in a few moments had convinced them that they had made a mistake. Two of them fell to rise no more. The others put spurs to their horses and got away.

"Afore de Lor', Marse Nick," said Pomp, grinning from ear to ear. "I nebber seed folks so skeered in my life."

"They don't know what to make of it."

"Dat s er fac'."

Crossing the river, they pushed on toward the Santee, where Sumter was when last heard from. On the way, not far from the river, he learned that the Swamp Fox was already on his way to join his forces with Greene.

Late in the afternoon he was halted by a small band of Tories, and made up his mind to let them capture him, just to see if, while a prisoner, he could hear them talk over the situation. Thinking they had him safe enough, they would not be guarded in their speech before him.

He pretended to surrender, and then told them Rawdon was retreating, and Greene on his flank with his Continentals.

"That's a derved lie!" blurted out one of the Tories. "Greene is retreating before Rawdon himself."

"So he was yesterday and the day before," remarked Burt, "but not to-day. The Swamp Fox, with a thousand rifles, gave Greene the advantage last night, and to-day Rawdon is in full retreat."

"I don't believe a word of it!" was the emphatic remark of the Tory leader. Burt looked him full in the face, and recognized him as one of his marked men. He had received a sabre cut across the face in such a way as to disfigure him almost beyond recognition.

His name was Brent Holmes.

On finding out that he was in the presence of Nick Burt Holmes sprang back, drew his pistol, and was on the point of firing, when Burt's face disappeared behind the adjustable iron helmet he wore. Had he been a moment later Holmes' bullet would have crashed through his brain. As it was the bullet glanced harmlessly off, and left him standing there in the midst of the astonished Tories.

The next moment, however, he reached out and caught the treacherous rascal by the arm.

"You are my prisoner, Brent Holmes," he said.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

"Ha—ha—ha!" he laughed; "shoot away. I am the Bullet Charmer. Take that, and that!" and emptying his own pistols at them, quietly proceeded to take a strong cord from his pocket and draw a noose at one end of it around his prisoner's neck.

Holmes struggled and yelled like a madman.

"Shoot him! All of you jump on him at once!" he cried, but they had heard of the Bullet Charmer, and didn't care to stay around where he was. They took to their heels and scattered through the woods the moment they heard the name of Bullet Charmer.

"It's no use, Holmes," Burt said. "All the traitors in the country can't save you. Thirty-two of that band of miscreants have gone the same way. Not one ever got away from me when once I put my hands on him."

"I—I—will—tell you where a—large treasure is——"

"No use, Holmes," said Burt, shaking his head. "The king himself hasn't money enough to buy you off. You are going to hang as sure as I have this cord around your neck."

In a few minutes another one had paid the penalty for his crime at Burt's home.

CHAPTER XXI.

A FORTUNATE MEETING.

"Nine more remain," he muttered, as he went to his horse and flung himself into the saddle.

He rode out into the road and hastened toward the Santee. Pomp followed close behind him, as he saw that the scout was in one of his silent moods.

Mile after mile was passed, and not a soul did they meet. The sun was just sinking behind the pines when the rapid rattle of horses' hoofs was heard in advance of them.

"Fore de Lor', it's a woman, sah!" exclaimed Pomp, as he caught a glimpse of a woman on horseback coming at full

speed toward them. A moment later five or six men appeared in sight in hot pursuit.

Burt dashed forward and met the female.

"Emily Geiger!"

"Yes, sir!"

"How in the world came you here?"

"I went to carry a message to General Sumter from General Greene."

"Heavens! Did you find Sumter?"

"Yes, sir, and he is gathering his men to go to the general."

"You are a heroine! I do homage to you!" and he lifted his hat and bowed low, till his face touched the horse's mane.

Burt drew his sword, raised his helmet, and, uttering yells of defiance, thundered forward to meet Emily's pursuers. The Tories, for such they were, halted and glared with amazement at seeing one man coming on full tilt toward them.

By the time he reached them they had come to a full stop, not believing he really meant to fight them by himself.

"Halt!" one of them said.

"You scoundrels!" he cried, "do you dare pursue a lady on the highway?"

"Scoundrels!" repeated the leader. "Who is it that dares talk that way to a king's man?"

"I, Nick Burt, the Bullet Charmer, dare do it. Have at ye, cowards!"

At the mention of his name the Tories suddenly became panic-stricken. They wheeled their horses and fled for dear life. Burt charged and cut down two of them, and then desisted.

Emily proceeded to relate her adventures on the trip till she reached the camp of the Game Cock.

"We will have to travel seven miles now before we strike a house, and that is occupied by a Tory," remarked Burt.

"Can't we ride all night, sir?" she asked.

"You and your horse are tired; you need rest, and shall have it. Come on now, and leave everything to me."

They rode seven miles, and then turned into a small settlement road that led to a double log house a quarter of a mile back from the main road. It was quite dark when they reached the house. Lights were burning in two rooms.

"Hello, in there!" sang out Burt.

Two men instantly seized their rifles and ran outdoors.

"We are friends," said Burt.

"Who are you, and what do you want here?" the elder of the two men asked.

"We are on our way to the Congaree river, and turned out here to ask shelter for this lady for the night."

"Well, we don't keep a tavern," was the gruff reply. "You can't stay here."

"But would not a bit of English gold make you a little more considerate for this lady's comfort?"

"Gold! English gold! I haven't seen a piece of gold in five years, stranger."

"Well, listen to it now," and Burt jingled some of it in his pocket. It had a magical effect on the old man.

"Git down," he said. "We ain't got much room, but you can have one end of the house for the night."

"That's all we want."

Burt alighted and assisted Emily to the ground.

She entered the house and looked around it. It was poorly furnished. An ugly old hag was cooking something at the wide berth, and did not even look out of the door, nor at our heroine when she entered.

Burt and Pomp turned to attend to their horses, and the old man took the younger one aside and whispered:

"Go after Cock-eye! We'll have gold, horses an' gal afore mornin'."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE OLD HUT IN THE WOODS.

When he had secured the horses in the bushes in the rear of the house, Burt left Pomp in charge of them and went in to join Emily. Soon after the old man came in and said to his wife:

"Old woman, we've got company for to-night."

The old woman looked sharply around at the two new comers, and then turned to her cooking again.

"Cook a good supper for 'em," said the old man, at which she merely nodded her head and went on cooking.

The old man tried with small success to "pump" Burt in regard to the movements of the armies and the young lady's identity. Finally he said:

"Ain't in the army, are you?"

"Oh, yes. I command a million of men," was the ironical reply.

"You do! Where are they?"

"Down below," and he pointed significantly downward with the index finger of his right hand.

Emily smiled in spite of her effort to appear indifferent to the conversation.

The old man saw he was annoying his guests, and desisted from asking any more hard questions. But he was determined to find out to which side he belonged. He knew that the black who had come with the visitors was out in the bushes with the horses. Pretending that the fire needed more wood, he went out and brought in an armful. Then he took up a pail and said he would go to the spring.

On the way back from the spring he stopped, gave Pomp a drink, and asked: "When did you leave the army?"

"Hain't been ter no army," replied Pomp, whose habit was to be non-committal about everything till his master had given him the cue.

"Why, your master has a sword!"

"Yes, sah, dat's er fact."

"Why should he wear a sword if he is not a soldier?"

"He picks his teef wid dat sword, marsa, an' sometimes he cuts off a man's head what axes too many questions."

"He does, eh?" the old man snarled. "Did you ever hear of a nigger being killed for impudence?"

"No, sah—nebber did."

"How long do you expect to live?"

"I'se gwine ter die ob ole age, marsa, ef I libs long enough."

"Maybe you will, an' maybe you won't. I've heard of sassy niggers being run off by the Evil One in the dark."

"Yes. I'se heerd ob a black goat what butt de innerds outen him, too, sah."

The old rascal took up his pail and returned to the house with it. He was more than ever resolved to find out to which side his visitors belonged. That they were Whigs he was more than half convinced, but still he desired to be sure of it. That the man had English gold he knew. That he intended to possess himself of it before daylight he was resolved.

During the evening Burt noticed that the young man who was in the house when he came was not about any more. That fact looked very suspicious, and he began to watch more closely.

The supper was a very plain one, but such as one would naturally expect in such a place in war times.

After the meal Burt whispered to Emily:

"Keep your eyes about you; I am suspicious of these people."

Midnight came, and, hearing suspicious sounds, Burt concluded that men outside were signaling to someone inside the house.

Presently he heard soft footsteps in the room. A minute or

two later he felt a hand feeling cautiously for his breast. Then he felt a blow on that side, as if someone had tried to drive a sharp instrument into him.

The moment the blow was struck he reached out and seized a man's arm. The man struggled to free himself. Burt sprang to his feet, gave the man such a twist of the arm as to turn him head downward, and a groan of pain was drawn from him.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"It's me!" groaned the old man. "It was all a mistake."

"Yes, so it was. Come out here!" and dragging him to the door, he opened it, and walked out with him.

Two other men ran up, and eagerly asked:

"Did you settle him? Is the gal asleep yet?"

For answer he knocked one of them senseless with his fist and then signaled for Pomp.

Pomp was just around the house, watching the movements of the two men. In a moment he was on hand with his battering-ram, and the other man was sent to grass, knocked clean out of time.

"Tie 'em both, Pomp," Burt said, and Pomp, who was always provided with strong cord, proceeded to make sure of them.

When they recovered consciousness they found themselves helpless prisoners. The old man was next tied, and then Burt went back into the house to get a light. Under the ashes in the broad fireplace he found a quantity of red embers. Piling on some dry wood, he soon had a cheerful blaze going.

Seeing who he was, the old woman uttered a scream, and ran at him with an ax. He threw out his hand and caught the handle, wrenching it from her grasp.

"No use, old woman," said Burt, as he caught her by the shoulder and pushed her down on a stool. "You are all caught."

"Mr. Burt! Mr. Burt!" cried Emily, opening the door of her room, "what's the matter?"

"We have caught these good, loyal king's men at their little game; that's all. Go to sleep!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PLEA FOR MERCY.

"Now, old lady," Burt said to the old woman, "you must excuse me if I tie you to the bed so you can't——"

"You shan't tie me!" she screamed, springing to her feet and glaring fiercely around her. "Where's my husband?"

"Here I am!" called the old man, "lying on my back on the ground, tied up like a dog!"

She darted out of the house and glared around in the dark. Coming from the glare of the light she could not at first see any object in the dark.

Burt took a torch from the hearth and went to the door with it. Then she saw her husband, son and a man called Cock-eye lying on the ground, bound hands and feet.

With a cry she sprang at him and made frantic efforts to free them.

Pomp came to the rescue, and she caught hold of his woolly hair.

Pomp suddenly threw his arms around her, gave her a terrible squeeze that caused her to release her hold for the purpose of scratching his face. But the moment he felt his head free from her grip, he threw her from him with tremendous force.

She fell over Cock-eye, and was too much stunned to do anything for several minutes. When she came fully to herself she found herself bound just as her son and husband were.

"This is a pretty piece of business," remarked Burt, holding the torch over his head, and throwing a glamour of light over the scene. "This is a game to murder a man in his sleep. That you did not succeed is no fault of yours. If I fail to

punish you for the crime you tried to commit the fault will be mine."

"What are you going to do?" the young man asked.

"I am going to hang you."

Burt was on the point of stringing up the old man, when Emily Geiger came running up to him, her long black hair hanging in wavy masses down her back.

"Oh, Mr. Burt!" she pleaded, laying both hands on his arm, and looking up into his stern face, "these people deserve death, and I believe it would be right to hang them. But mercy is a Heaven-like attribute. Give me their lives, and I will heap coals of fire on their heads!"

"Do you mean it, Miss Geiger?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied.

"Then they are yours."

"Oh, thank you!" she exclaimed.

"Now the hussy will burn us!" said the old woman. "She said she would heap coals of fire on our heads. I'd rather be hung."

"Ah, woman!" said Emily, turning to the old hag, "I will grant you mercy, not because you deserve it, but because I believe you are not prepared to die and meet your Maker. You are free to go where you will, but I pray you remember how near to death's door your crimes once brought you and live a better life. As for your husband and son, if they will take the oath to support the patriot cause against the king and enlist under Marion I will give them their lives. Otherwise they shall hang. Will you do that?"

They agreed to.

Burt administered the oath. Then Emily took a knife and cut the bonds that held them.

"Now, look here," said Burt, as they rose to their feet, "I am going to General Marion's headquarters in the morning. Be ready to go with me. If you fail, woe be unto you."

He then went back into the house with Emily and the old woman, and Pomp returned to his horses. As it was nearly dawn, they did not retire again, but sat up by the fire. The old woman sat with her elbows on her knees, and chin in both hands, staring at the embers on the hearth. She was even a more hardened wretch than the men of the family, never manifesting any gratitude toward the young lady who had saved their lives.

After breakfast next morning Burt, Emily and Pomp mounted their horses and rode away, driving the two men before them, leaving the old woman behind.

CHAPTER XXIV.

EMILY GEIGER'S TRIUMPH.

The two prisoners trudged along the road without uttering a word. They had met with one who had proved to be too much for them.

At noon they met a party of Marion's scouts. They recognized the old man and his son as notorious robbers and murderers, who had long enjoyed the protection of the Tories because they only robbed and murdered patriots.

Burt told them that they were going to join Marion's force.

"The Swamp Fox won't have 'em," said one of the scouts.

"Yes, he will," said another, winking slyly at his comrades. "He'll be glad to get 'em. We're going straight over to his camp. Let us have 'em. We'll take 'em along."

"Yes," said Emily, glad to have them out of her sight. "Let them go with them, Mr. Burt."

"Of course. Tell the general that I send him two good recruits."

Father and son made no objection, and they were turned over to the patriot scouts, who quickly left our hero, going into the woods.

Truth compels us to write the sad record of that most vin-

dictive of all wars. Such was the bitter hatred existing between Whigs and Tories in the Carolinas, that in less than half an hour after being transferred to the custody of the scouts, the two wretches dangled from the limb of an oak.

In the meantime our hero and his beautiful charge pushed on toward the Congaree. At sunset they struck the picket lines of Greene's army, which had crossed the river on its march toward the coast. In another hour they were conducted to the headquarters of the general.

"Ah!" exclaimed the patriot general, on seeing Emily, "the brave young lady who volunteered to go to Sumter! Did you find him?"

"Yes, sir, and gave him your message."

It was a great triumph for Emily.

The other generals and their staff officers gathered around her and congratulated her. A brave old Continental colonel said to her:

"If you will remain single till the end of the war, and will be content to be an old man's darling, I will lay my hand and fortune at your feet."

She blushed and said:

"I thank you ever so much, sir. I think I will be single when the war ends, and don't know but I may die so."

"Never!" said another officer. "We'll see that you shall have the pick of the Continental army."

That raised a laugh, in which she joined as heartily as any of them.

That night the officers gave her a reception in the farmhouse where the general had his headquarters. Over one hundred of all grades of rank paid their respects to her. She was as happy as a young kitten, conversing freely with all who approached her.

The next morning the army marched toward the coast, the scouts bringing in news of Rawdon's retreat toward Charleston.

Burt escorted Emily across the river, and reached her home in an hour or two after. Her parents received her with open arms, having been very uneasy about her.

Burt never dismounted. He was anxious to rejoin Greene's army, and march with them toward the scene of action.

Emily grasped his hand and looked up into his face.

"I haven't words in which to thank you for all you have done for me," she said. "I shall never forget your kindness. Will you ever come to see us again?"

"If I live I will," he said, returning the warm pressure of her hand.

He put spurs to his horse and dashed away, followed by the faithful Pomp.

That evening he was following in the wake of the Continental army when a band of Tories, knowing the enemy was before—not behind—them, committed unheard-of barbarities. They numbered about two score men. Burt and Pomp suddenly ran into them as they were plundering a farmhouse and ill-treating the females.

Of course they immediately surrounded him and demanded the surrender of his sword. In the party he saw two of his marked men. One of them recognized him, and cried out:

"That's Nick Burt, the worst rebel in Carolina!"

"You are right. I am the worst enemy to the king in America."

"You won't be so long," said another. "Get down and beg the king's pardon."

Burt leaped to the ground, and the next moment his iron helmet encased his head. Then his heavy sword flashed in the air.

"Oh, you mean fight, do you! Have at you!"

The Tory who crossed swords with him went down. Then a half dozen struck at him at once. They saw that his head

was protected, and turned the points of their swords against his body. There, too, they saw that he was invulnerable. One, two, three, four, five, men went down, and he still remained unhurt. Then they withdrew from the reach of his terrible blade, and opened a fruitless fire on him.

Burt, after taking one prisoner, hastened in pursuit of the others, who had taken refuge in a cabin in the rear of the farmhouse.

With an ax he burst open the door and rushed in. They fired a volley at him, but his steel armor was equal to the emergency. With his terrible blade he cut down a half dozen or so of them, till he came to the man he wanted.

"Ah! you are the one I want!" he said. "The others may go, but if you ever trouble the Whigs again I'll be the death of every one of you. This man I am going to hang for burning my cabin with my wife and child in it. Death to all Tories!"

CHAPTER XXV.

A GALLANT CHARGE.

Satisfied with the capture of the two men, Burt drew off, and carried them with him. Satisfied that he was a demon of destruction, the Tories were glad enough to have him go. They had found out that they could do him no harm, and did not care to endanger their own lives by prolonging a contest with him.

Having secured his two prisoners, Burt remounted and rode away, Pomp leading them by a cord.

He did not go very far, however, before he turned into the woods with them. Pomp knew what fate was in store for them, and kept a solemn face on him. If the prisoners did not know, it was because they were fools. They knew in what way they had treated their captor three years ago.

It is unnecessary to repeat the description of the hanging scene. They were hanged, and left hanging there. Burt and Pomp rode away in silence, satisfied with the work of vengeance for the day.

The day passed without any other occurrence, and the two slept in the woods that night. They were up with the birds, however, and succeeded in shooting a wild turkey, which Pomp cooked for breakfast.

Several days passed, during which time Burt and Pomp paid visits to other localities in search of the remaining men of that band whose destruction the scout had vowed. They found three more and disposed of them in the usual way. There now remained but three more of the fated forty-two to be executed, and an eager desire to have it over with seemed to possess the scout.

Greene, Marion and Sumter were following the British columns toward Charleston. Rawdon saw the storm gathering, and hastened to get away from it ere it burst upon him. The patriots everywhere were arming and becoming bolder and more defiant every day. Small bands of Tories were cut to pieces in every direction, until a general demoralization had taken possession of them.

At last the patriots were strong enough to challenge Rawdon to a battle. But that wily commander declined. The patriots wore no uniform, but they carried deadly rifles and bright blades, and had the range of the whole country. The redecoats had well tested the accuracy of their aim and the strength of their blows in many a hard-fought contest.

Burt caught up with the main army down on the Ashly and Cooper rivers. Marion was busy with his dauntless partisans, leading them here and there, wherever he could hear of a band of either redecoats or Tories, and giving them plenty of hot work to do. Sumter and his men were busy on the other side of the Ashly, and so bold was he that the British commander in the city resolved on his capture or destruction. He

sent one of his most trusty officers with a band of redcoats and Tories numbering some five hundred men, to lay a trap for the Game Cock.

One of Sumter's spies carried the news to him. Then Burt got it and carried it to Marion. The gallant Swamp Fox at once resolved to have a hand in the affair, and so did our hero. He tendered his services to Marion, and they were promptly accepted.

Captain Singleton, Pomp's owner, having returned, the black patriot went back to his post of servant to his young master. Burt shook hands with him and left a shining gold coin in his palm. Pomp quickly transferred it to his pocket, and mentally calculated the amount of gewgaws it would buy for Mandy, his black sweetheart up on the Congaree.

The British attempt, to capture Sumter was made at midnight. They marched silently toward his camp only to find the Game Cock ready. The British officer was taken aback by the discovery and tried to get away without a fight. That was impossible. The Game Cock attacked him furiously, inflicting a heavy loss on him. But his men were too well disciplined to be scattered. They held together in the dark and repulsed Sumter every time he charged. Daylight came, and then he began an orderly retreat toward the city. In the gray dawn of the morning the brilliant uniforms were fine targets for the patriot riflemen.

Suddenly they received a hot fire right in front.

Marion and his men were there!

"Charge!" yelled the British colonel, and the redcoats promptly responded to the command. The Tories came on behind, for they carried no bayonets on their rifles.

Marion's men, having no bayonets, either, poured in another volley and retired from before the line of bristling bayonet points,

At that moment Burt sprang into the middle of the road, and, shooting down the leader of the redcoats, called out to the patriots:

"Stand your ground, men of Carolina!"

Angered at the fall of their leader, the redcoats fired a volley at him. The iron helmet saved him from instant death, for seven bullets struck it and nearly twenty rattled against other parts of his body. The concealed armor under his clothes protected him from all harm, and to the profound amazement of the redcoats, he stood there when the smoke of the volley cleared away.

"Charge, men of Carolina!" cried the shrill voice of Marion, then the patriots rushed forward with yells and a withering volley.

The enemy broke and fled in all directions, many of them being afterward picked off by the patriot riflemen.

After this conflict the enemy was very particular about how he ventured out beyond the lines. The patriots were between him and the Tory bands in the interior of the State. Those bands were now at the mercy of Marion, Sumter, Lee, Horry and other gallant patriot leaders.

In the meantime the British Home Government had become dissatisfied with the generalship of Lord Rawdon, and removed him from the command of the king's forces in that section, and appointed Colonel Stewart to command in his stead.

Under Stewart, after receiving some reinforcements, the British again commenced an aggressive campaign. They pushed their way into the interior again, and again Lee, Marion, Sumter and Greene combined to overwhelm them. The patriots gathered from all quarters, and many brilliant engagements took place between small bands of the opposing forces.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE YOUNG RECRUIT.

During the concentration of the patriot forces preparatory to giving the enemy a crushing blow, Burt was busy in his work of vengeance. He succeeded in reducing his list down to one man who had sought safety in the heart of the British army. That man was now a captain in the king's uniform. His name was James Bartlett. Burt well knew where he was, and had made up his mind to get him before the British army returned to Charleston, even if he had to go into the heart of the British camp to reach him.

At last the two armies began to concentrate for a struggle for the mastery at Eutaw Springs.

Burt was lying under the shade of a tree, resting from the fatigue of a long ride, when a slender youth armed with rifle and pistols came up with the following letter:

"Dear Friend.—This will be handed you by my cousin, Archie Berkeley. A month ago he was an ardent king's man; now he is an earnest patriot—made so by your arguments, which I brought to bear upon him. So you see the fruit of your conversion of myself to your cause. He is true as steel, and worthy of your confidence, and desires to prove it by doing valiant service to his country by your side. I take the liberty of sending him to you, hoping that on account of his inexperience you will allow him to remain near you. I ask this, knowing your great heart will sympathize with me in my fears for his safety. Ever your friend. Leila Berkeley."

The youth eyed him very closely as he read the letter, as if uncertain how he would be received. When he finished reading the letter, Burt turned to the youth and grasped his hand.

"I am glad to see you here, Mr. Berkeley," he said. "We are on the eve of a death struggle with the enemy of our country. You will see a battle before you will have seen much service."

Burt inquired in a very kindly way about the health and prosperity of Archie's fair cousin, then lay down on the grass under the shade of the tree again, and left young Berkeley to amuse himself as he pleased. He spent several hours strolling about the camp, watching the soldiers at their various camp duties. When tired of this he went back to where Burt was lying on the grass, and lay down by his side. In a few minutes he was soundly sleeping.

How long he slept he did not know. Burt called to him and he sprang up, as if alarmed at something.

"You have been sleeping," Burt said. "That was right; we may be in the saddle all night. Are you hungry enough to eat some pork and potatoes?"

"Yes, sir. I am quite hungry," was the reply.

"Ah! That's a good sign. Come with me. I have been invited to partake of a meal with Major Horry."

Young Berkeley followed him to the quarters of Major Horry, where he was introduced as a recruit from one of the most prominent Tory families in the Carolinas. Major Horry took him by the hand and welcomed him to the ranks of the patriots.

Young Berkeley went down the hill and sent his servant up to see Burt. His name was Jim, a strong, well-built son of Africa, whose predominant trait was fidelity.

Burt was satisfied. He told Archie Berkeley when he came back that Jim would make a good man in camp as well as in the saddle.

"We are going out to-night," he added in a whisper, "to attack a band of Tories. The Swamp Fox himself will lead us."

Just as the sun was sinking behind the tree tops Burt led the way out of camp, followed by Archie and Jim. An hour later the Swamp Fox and his night riders followed. They were going to surprise a camp of Tories some ten miles away, of which the scouts had brought in the news.

A little before midnight they came within sight of the Tory campfires. The camp was near a large spring. There were about 150 men present, as near as our hero could judge. But he saw that they had no suspicions of danger. They had met for the purpose of marching at daylight to join the British at Eutaw Springs.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ARCHIE'S FIRST BATTLE.

Major Horry took half the patriot force and went around to the west side, while Marion was to strike them on the east side of the camp.

When everything was in readiness Burt turned to Archie and said:

"We are going to charge, fire, and then go in to kill as many as we can. Take good aim, and bring down your man at the first fire. Then keep alongside of me."

Archie made no reply, but compressed his lips, ground his teeth, and took deliberate aim at a stalwart Tory.

"Fire!" yelled the Swamp Fox, in clear, ringing tones.

At the instant a sheet of flame burst forth all along the line. Over a score of Tories fell, killed or wounded, and then a panic seized them. They fired a few random shots, and fled like so many frightened sheep. As they ran into Major Horry's ambush they received another withering fire that laid a dozen more of them low.

"Charge, men of Carolina!" cried Marion, and then the patriots on both sides rushed forward, cooping the doomed Tories up between the two fires. Then commenced a terrible slaughter. Burt laid about him with his heavy sword like a madman. Archie kept near him, emptying both his pistols at the Tories.

"Quarter! Quarter!" screamed the Tories, throwing down their guns and falling on their knees.

The patriots instantly ceased firing. Only a score or so of the enemy escaped, so complete was the surprise. It was all over in ten minutes.

Then the glad shouts of the victorious patriots rang out on the night air. They hurraed for Washington and the Continental Congress; for Greene and the Swamp Fox.

The Swamp Fox gathered up his arms and prisoners and started back to the camp of the Continental army.

He was not the man to wait for the enemy to pounce down upon him, and catch him with the fruits of a victory in his hands.

Just as the sun was peeping over the pines the gallant Marion regained the lines of the Continental army with his prisoners. General Greene congratulated him and his brave men, and continued to make preparations for the coming struggle.

The day was spent in camp by our hero and young Berkeley, who clung to him as if he were the only friend he had in the world. That evening he was in the saddle again. Archie and Jim also mounted.

Out on the road Burt and Archie talked pleasantly together for a long time. But when they drew near the British lines they observed a discreet silence.

The moon was shining brightly. The challenges of the British sentinels could be plainly heard from where Burt and Archie took up their position.

But they did not know that a Tory had seen them and carried news of their presence to the enemy. The officer of the picket line at once resolved on their capture. He took a dozen dragoons and crept over the line, the Tory spy guiding him, and got into the rear of Burt, and his young comrade. The first that Burt knew of their presence was when the dragoons dashed through the bushes, and, leveling their carbines at them, demanded an instant surrender.

"Of course," said Burt, afraid that resistance would cause the death of Archie. "You are too many for us."

"To whose command do you belong?"

"Marion's," replied Burt.

"Oh, you do, eh? We'll soon have that artful fox dangling to a tree."

"Do you hang your prisoners, sir?" Burt asked.

"We are going to hang the leaders of this wicked rebellion when the end comes," was the reply.

Owing to this conversation the captain and his men were thrown off their guard. Burt drew his sword and gave a slash with it, and down went the officer.

Slash! Slash! and two more went down, and the rest fled.

Burt and Archie took to the road, and were about to retreat toward the patriot lines, when a bugle sounded in front of them. The next moment they heard the thunderous roar of a body of cavalry on a charge.

"This way, quick!" cried Burt, leading the way into the bushes on the roadside.

With his face ashen-hued Archie dashed into the bushes in time to escape the rush of the dragoons. He was not even seen by the enemy, who dashed by at full speed.

Marion was hot in pursuit.

The dragoons reached the British lines and received reinforcements, with which they turned savagely on Marion's riders. It then came their turn to pursue, and the patriots had to turn back. They came back, firing at their pursuers, emptying many a saddle in the clear moonlight.

"They are coming back," said Burt. "The dragoons are pushing our men back."

Again Archie turned pale, but he never flinched.

"Come, we must help our friends!"

They dashed out into the road and joined in the fight. Gallant Captain Baxter was struggling against odds.

"Archie, stay here till I come back. I am going into the jaws of death! Come, captain, order your men to charge with me."

Baxter was a brave, daring man. He instantly ordered his men to turn and charge the enemy.

Burt raised himself in his stirrups and cried out in stentorian tones:

"Men of Carolina, the Bullet Charmer will lead you! Turn and charge!"

"Follow the Bullet Charmer, men!" cried Baxter, and, with a wild shout, they turned and rode headlong at the dragoons.

The redcoats saw them coming, and prepared to receive them. Burt dashed upon them with his great heavy sword, and sent redcoat after redcoat tumbling to the ground.

The clash of steel, the fierce cries of the combatants and mad rush of frenzied steeds gave young Archie Berkeley an idea of war such as he had never dreamed of before. But he caught the excitement, was borne into the thickest of the fight by the horses he bestrode, and soon found himself defending his head from the attacks of a redcoat who manifested a desire to split it with his sword.

Without understanding anything about the art of fencing, he ran his opponent through the body and saw him fall to the ground. What he did after that he scarcely knew. He soon heard the shouts of victory around him, and saw the dragoons put spurs to their horses and retreat.

"Ah, Archie, my boy!" exclaimed Burt, seizing him by the hand. "Captain Baxter tells me you fought like a young demon! I am proud of you. How I wish I could see your cousin and tell her what a brave man you are!"

Baxter withdrew his men to the lines of the patriot army and then Burt and Archie sought the rest they so much needed. They gave their horses in charge of Jim, and, making pillows of their saddles, lay down under the silent stars to sleep.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

When they arrived at headquarters they found everybody moving about in a high degree of excitement.

Burt received his orders, and pretty soon they saw bodies of troops moving, and, springing into their saddles, proceeded at once to report to Major Horry. That gallant officer informed Burt that General Greene was going to attack the British army and fight it out then and there.

The British came forward in their brilliant uniforms and met the patriots with a withering fire. But the patriots returned it steadily, and hurled back the terrific charge of the British cavalry. Charge after charge was made, and the bloody tide of battle rolled from one side to the other.

The patriots made a final charge and drove the enemy back. They were driven back all along the line. Their camp, with all their rich baggage, fell into the hands of the patriots. Shouts of victory went up all over the field. Instead of pursuing the enemy and killing as many as they could, the eager patriots, tired, hungry and elated over the victory, commenced an indiscriminate plundering of the British camp.

It was then that the enemy rallied and returned to the charge. The patriots were taken by surprise and thrown into great confusion. General Greene, by almost superhuman exertions, rallied his men sufficiently to prevent a defeat, not to say a complete rout of his force, and withdrew from the field. But he carried about six hundred prisoners with him and several British standards.

As soon as the patriots had drawn off with their prisoners. Burt went in among the prisoners and searched for a certain officer among them. He soon found Captain Bartlett. He had been captured among a score of other officers.

"Ah, Bartlett!" he exclaimed, "I am sorry to see you here."

"See here, Burt," he said, "I think we can arrange to meet and settle our quarrel in a fair fight, when the best man can win, and——"

"No—never! I intend to hang you!" hissed Burt.

Now that Bartlett, the last of the doomed forty-two, was a prisoner of war, Burt hung around the camp where the prisoners were held. Nothing could tempt him away. Baxter and Horry tried in vain to persuade him to go on expeditions with them. He declined every time, on some excuse, and remained in camp. To Archie Berkeley, however, he was kind and sociable, often talking to him about his Cousin Leila, of whom he spoke in tender terms.

One day he suddenly took Archie's arm, and led him out into the woods.

"Archie Berkeley," he said, in very low tones, "I am going to let you into a secret. If you betray me, woe be unto you."

"He led him to a certain spot, about three miles in the rear of the camp, where a tall sycamore tree stood near the edge of a small opening.

"Here is where I want you to be at midnight, with your horse, mine and your servant Jim's. I am going to be in disguise. You must call me Mr. Harris. I will call you Archie. We must both pass as Tories. Do you understand me fully, do you think?"

"Yes, sir, fully." And he repeated the instructions he had received.

That night Archie, mounted on one horse and leading two others, rode out to the spot where Burt had told him to wait, and there dismounted.

A few minutes later, however, he heard a signal in the distance, and answered it.

"I'm right, Archie," said Burt, coming forward with another whom he did not recognize. "We are late, but better late than never."

"A little, but it's all right now. Here, you can have this horse sir."

"Thanks, sir," and the man sprang into the saddle.

He was Captain Bartlett in disguise.

Sunrise found them at least twenty miles on the way toward Charleston. Bartlett grew merry and light-hearted. He felt that he had a start that would place him forever beyond the reach of Nick Burt.

All day long they rode, and far into the night. They encamped in a dense wood, and resumed the journey at daylight the next day. They came in sight of Charleston a little before sunset on the second day. In the distance could be seen the British flag flying, and the tall masts of the fleet.

"Ah! That's a glorious sight!" exclaimed Bartlett. "That flag represents the majesty of the king. Once more under it, I can defy Nick Burt and his vow of vengeance."

"Nick Burt is here!" cried Burt, tearing away the false beard and wig that had concealed his identity from his victim.

"Great Heavens!" groaned Bartlett, "I am lost!"

"You are, for to yonder limb you will hang, as sure as yonder sun looks down upon us."

He left Bartlett hanging there—the last of the forty-two men whose death he had sworn.

He sprang into the saddle and rode away, Archie riding by his side. But on that very evening they were fired on by a party of Tories who tried to stop them. Archie gave a groan and fell from his horse.

Then Burt, aroused to the highest fury, turned on the Tories and slew four of them.

"Archie, my boy!" he called, kneeling by the side of the youth, "are you much hurt?"

Only a groan did he hear. He was bleeding from a wound in the head. But soon Archie regained consciousness. The bleeding made him faint again, and Burt unbuttoned his coat.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed; "he's a woman! It's Leila Berkeley!"

"Forgive me!" she said. "I couldn't help it. My father drove me from home because I denounced the king. I came to you as my only friend. I can die content now."

"No—no—you shall not die, Leila Berkeley!" he exclaimed. "You shall live to take the place of her whose death you have helped to avenge. You shall be my wife!"

A happy light came into her eyes.

"I do not deserve such happiness," she said.

"Yes, you do," and he imprinted a kiss on her lips.

The wound was only a scalp wound, from which she soon recovered.

Burt carried her to a relative, where she remained till the end of the war and then married her.

Some of the most prominent families in South Carolina trace their ancestry to the BULLET CHARMER and his pretty wife.

THE END.

Read "FAST MAIL FRED; or, THE SMARTEST ENGINEER ON THE ROAD," by Jas. C. Merritt, which will be the next number (612) of "Pluck and Luck."

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THINGS OF INTEREST.

The principal source of the world's clove supply is Zanzibar and the neighboring island of Pemba, East Africa. A ten-year-old plantation should produce twenty pounds of cloves to the tree. Trees of twenty years frequently produce upward of one hundred pounds each. Besides the buds the stems are gathered and form an article of commerce, commanding one-fifth the price of cloves and having about the same percentage of strength. To this is due the fact that ground cloves can be bought at a lower price than the whole cloves.

Milo Kelly says that porcupines kill more timber on the coast of Alaska than is used for commercial purposes. "Wherever you go along the coast," said he, "you will notice dead standing timber. There are whole patches of these in places. In nine cases out of ten the cause can be traced to the work of porcupines. They ring the trees in hunting for the soft bark next the sap. The government is going to lots of trouble and expense to conserve the timber along this west coast, but is overlooking the most destructive of all agents. The thing for the government to do if it wants to save the timber is to find some method of killing the porcupines."

Instead of employing hundreds of men with picks to dig up streets for the purpose of resurfacing them, the city of Cincinnati now uses a 15,000-pound rake, which enjoys the gentle name of go-devil. When dragged along by a steam roller it does the work of the laborers with their picks in about one-fifth of the time and 50 per cent. better. The big steel teeth dig into the street six inches deep and three feet wide, and travel about twenty-five feet a minute. It is estimated that the machine saves the work of hundreds of laborers and pays for itself every two days' work.

An old authority tells that the easiest way to capture apes is for the hunter to pretend to shave himself, then to wash his face, fill the basin with a sort of bird lime, and leave it for the apes to blind themselves. If the Chinese story is to be believed, the imitative craze is even more fatal in another way, for if you shoot one monkey of a band with a poisoned arrow, its neighbor, jealous of so unusual a decoration, will snatch the arrow from it and stab itself, only to have it torn away by a third, until in succession the whole troop have committed suicide. In their wild life baboons, as well as the langurs and many other monkeys, undoubtedly submit to the

authority of recognized leaders. There is co-operation between them to the extent that when fighting in company one will go to the help of another which is hard pressed. In rocky ground they roll down stones upon their enemies, and when making a raid, as on an orchard which they believe to be guarded, the attack is conducted on an organized plan, sentries being posted and scouts thrown out, which gradually feel their way forward to make sure that the coast is clear, while the main body remains in concealment behind until told that the road is open. From the fact that the sentries stay posted throughout the raid, getting for themselves no share of the plunder, it has been assumed that there must be some sort of division of the proceeds afterward. Man, again, has been differentiated from all other creatures as being a tool-using animal, but more than one kind of monkey takes a stone in its hand and with it breaks the nuts which are too hard to be cracked with the teeth.

OUR COMIC COLUMN.

The barber (to customer whose hair is standing on end as he reads paper)—Would you mind leaving that murder, sir, while I'm brushing your hair?

Silicus—I can't decide which one of those two girls I want to marry. Cynicus—Well, marry either one of them and you'll discover that you got the wrong one.

"See how fair and white your sister's complexion is, Robbie," said the mother. "Well, I suppose my face would be the same way if I kept washing it every day like sister does!" was the youngster's reply.

The small boy in the audience watched the "classic" dancer in her barefooted poses. "Where are the lady's stockings, mamma?" he asked in his clear little voice. "Hush, dear. I don't know," the embarrassed mother replied. "Guess maybe she's hung 'em up for Christmas," said the small boy.

A couple from a central Kansas farm went to a hotel for dinner. They had the appearance of a bride and groom. Their meal included some sliced tomatoes for the young man. He ate them with a relish. When the tomatoes were gone he discovered a queer-looking dish, containing a queer-looking fluid, on the table. He called the young woman's attention to it. "What's that for, Lulu?" he asked. The waitress was standing near. She overheard the question. "That's for the tomatoes," she said. "It's dressing that is put on tomatoes." "Aw, pshaw, Lulu," said the young man. "I've already eat my tomatoes. I can't put this dressin' on 'em now." "Yes, you kin," she replied. "Drink it." And he did.

The Literary Young Man was very much enamored of the Frivolous Girl. But he couldn't seem to get on. He didn't know what to talk to her about, not being in the least bit frivolous himself. But making a blind stab at conversation he said: "Do you like Byron?" "Byron who?" demanded the Frivolous Girl. "Do you mean Byron Douglass, the actor?" The Literary Young Man groaned, but returned valiantly to the attack. "What do you think of Bacon?" he asked. "I know absolutely nothing about it," replied the Frivolous Girl. "You see, I never went to cooking-school." A glad light shone in the Literary Young Man's eyes. "Will you marry me?" he cried.

YOUNG JACKSON

BY KIT CLYDE.

"What's that, Ben?"

"Eh? Jist a leetle louder, boy, the old man's hearin' ain't as sharp as it was forty year ago," answered old Ben Broek, the fisherman, dropping the chain that secured a row-boat to a stake on the beach.

"I heard a strange sound like the cry of some one in mortal agony. Did you hear anything?" said old Ben's companion, a strong, muscular young man with a resolute face, which was adorned with a sweeping black mustache.

"Where away?" was old Ben's nautical query.

"Up there," answered the young man. "It seemed to come from the house on the cliff," and he pointed to a neat cottage that perched upon the summit of the abrupt coast like a huge white bird.

Old Ben followed the direction in which his companion pointed with his eyes.

"No, no, Ben, I tell you it was a human voice—a man's voice; and if I am not much mistaken there's something wrong up there," said the young man in a tone of conviction.

The old man had suddenly noticed the absence of his young companion's dog, which had been with him until within a few moments, when, unheeded by either his young master or the old fisherman, he had bounded off up the cliff and disappeared in the direction of the white cottage.

"Why, sure enough, where is the dog? Here, Dragon! Dragon!" called the young man.

At this moment two stylishly-attired and very bright and pretty young ladies, whom the young man at once took to be city girls, came round the rocks upon the beach and advanced toward him hurriedly.

Their cheeks were flushed, and it was evident that they were very much agitated.

"Oh, sir," panted the foremost one of this charming couple.

The young man raised his hat gallantly.

"Dick Gordon, otherwise 'Young Jackson,' the detective, at your service," he said, politely.

At the mention of his name both of the young ladies started violently, and they regarded the young man with new interest.

"You Young Jackson, the detective, whom we have read about! You the detective who it is said bears a charmed life!" said one of the young ladies, while the other exclaimed:

"Oh, my!"

Young Jackson bowed.

"In what way can I be of service, ladies? I judge that something has occurred to disturb your tranquillity," he said.

"Oh, sir," said the young lady who had first spoken, "my name is Mabel Heath, and this is my sister, Julia. We are living in the cottage up yonder alone with our father this summer, and just a moment ago, as we were walking on the sand beyond the rocks, we heard a terrible shriek. It was my father's voice. We left him all alone in the cottage this morning when we came out for a walk, and I fear that some evil has befallen him, for he had in his possession a large sum of money which he was going to deposit in the bank to-day. Will you not come with us to our home? We are afraid to go there alone now."

"Most certainly, miss, and if I can be of any assistance you can count me in," answered Young Jackson, and he turned toward a rock upon which he had hung his loose light sporting jacket preparatory to a row on the water.

While he had been conversing with the young ladies, a dark, evil face had raised itself from behind the rock and peered at the group on the beach, and a large, coarse hand had fumbled

with the young detective's coat as though its owner was striving to pick the pockets of the garment.

Young Jackson put on his coat, and, followed by the Heath sisters and old Ben, the fisherman, he hurried up the rocks toward the cottage.

The door was wide open.

Young Jackson entered first, and behind him came the young ladies and old Ben.

A startling sight greeted them.

The room was in confusion.

Chairs and tables were overturned and a glass vase had been broken.

In the center of the room, stretched at full length upon his back, lay a man.

He was stone dead, they all saw at a glance.

Over the murdered man stood Dragon, Young Jackson's wonderful dog detective, which, according to report, had aided his young master in many a skillful piece of detective work.

The dog's right fore-paw rested upon the breast of the fallen man, and, as the animal caught sight of his young master, he raised his head and gave utterance to a glad bark, and Young Jackson saw that the animal had some small object, which was almost invisible, between his teeth.

The two young girls rushed forward and knelt beside the dead man.

"My father, dead, murdered!" screamed Mabel, while her sister wrung her hands in speechless grief.

"I guess I'll run up to the village and git ther constable, for this here are a case of murder, and no mistake," said old Ben, and without waiting for Young Jackson's answer, he ran off as fast as he could toward the little fishing village, a quarter of a mile up the coast.

"Come back! Come back!" shouted Young Jackson.

If old Ben heard he heeded not.

Then to the girls:

"Is there anything missing from your father's person?"

The girls hastily searched their father's pockets.

"Yes," said Mabel—"the large, light-colored pocket-book that contained the large sum of money I spoke to you of is gone."

Young Jackson threw off his jacket and began to search about the room. Minutely he went over every inch of the space of the floor.

Upon his hands and knees he went.

Suddenly he picked up a little piece of blue cloth and thrust it into his vest pocket with a muttered exclamation.

Young Jackson went outside of the cottage and searched about in the sand before it for tracks.

This done, he came back into the house and sat down.

"Your father's coat is black; this is blue. Miss Heath, I think as we detectives express it, I have struck a clew."

Suddenly he asked:

"Did anyone in the neighborhood know that your father had this money in his possession that you are aware of?"

"I do not know that any one had any knowledge of the fact, sir. My father never had anything to say to the people of the village," Mabel made answer.

"Some one knew it," muttered Young Jackson.

At this moment Julia, who had gone to the window that looked toward the fishing village, turned from it, and said:

"The fisherman is coming back, and a crowd of the village people are with him."

"Just as I feared," muttered Young Jackson.

"Why so?" asked Mabel.

"Oh, I dislike to have a gaping, curious crowd of country people at the scene of a crime that I have an interest in working up a case out of," answered the young detective, carelessly.

The sound of voices was now heard, and in a few moments old Ben, followed by a large, coarse-looking man, who ap-

nounced himself as Constable Sile Hill, and a crowd of villagers arrived at the cottage.

The village constable, and indeed all of the crowd, were ignorant of the fact that the young man was a detective, for old Ben, in his excitement, had not informed them of this fact.

"So, so," said Hill, gruffly. "There's been killin' goin' on here, eh?" He glanced at Young Jackson as he spoke.

"As you see," answered Young Jackson, who was watching him as closely as a cat watches a mouse.

"Anything missin', gals?" the constable asked, turning to the bereaved and drawing his right hand across his eyes.

Hill's face was the same that had peered from behind the rock on the beach.

The girls explained that their father's light-colored pocket-book, containing a large sum of money, was gone.

Young Jackson noticed that Hill's left hand was imperfect. The middle finger was missing, from the second joint up.

Hill strode across the room and proceeded to examine the dead man, and as he turned away after doing this, he, seemingly accidentally, knocked Young Jackson's coat from the chair on which it lay.

As the garment fell to the floor, a large, light-colored, leather pocket-book fell from its inside pocket.

"My father's pocket-book!" exclaimed Mabel Heath, springing forward and picking it up.

"It's empty!" she cried, after examining it.

Young Jackson was dumfounded.

"Ha! ha!" cried Constable Hill, "I reckon we have not far to look for the cuss as done this bloody work—eh, neighbors?"

"No, no; arrest the dandy wretch."

"Let's lynch the city sport that's done this murder!" cried the villagers, and they surged toward Young Jackson, but Dragon crouched and showed his teeth, and no one laid hands on him.

"How in the deuce could that have got into my pocket?" thought Young Jackson; but, notwithstanding the alarming situation in which he found himself, he was as cool as an icicle, and as composed as a judge.

"Do not judge me hastily, Miss Heath," he said, in a voice intended for her ears alone.

"Neighbors, I reckon I'll hev to take this young feller in," said Hill.

"He called me back when I started to go to the village arter you," said old Ben.

"That was suspicious," said Hill.

"Yes, he did not seem to want any one to come," said Julia Heath.

"Circumstances all pint at him fur the feller as did this job," said Hill.

"When we first came in and found Mr. Heath, the young feller's dog were a-standin' over the murdered man," was the further information vouchsafed by old Ben.

"By thunder, that's a clincher! He are the murderer!" cried Hill.

During all this Dragon, the detective's dog, had been growling fiercely, and his attention seemed to be turned principally to Hill.

"Come, young feller, you're my prisoner," said Hill, advancing toward Young Jackson, notwithstanding Dragon's warning growl.

"Hold all!" thundered Young Jackson. "Do you see this bit of blue cloth?" and he held up the bit of fabric he had found on the floor. "You observe it is blue? Do you notice that your worthy constable wears a blue coat? Do you further observe that the second button has been torn off violently, and that with the button a little bit of cloth was taken, leaving a speck of the white lining exposed? I see you notice all these little peculiarities about the coat of your worthy

constable. Now, Ben, old man, just take this cloth, and see if it don't exactly fit the torn spot on the coat of Mr. Hill? I found it beside the body of the murdered man."

As Young Jackson concluded Ben came forward and took the cloth.

Hill turned pale.

"Throw up your hands, or I'll blow your brains out!" thundered Young Jackson.

Hill obeyed sullenly, but he had grown deadly pale.

Ben applied the cloth, and all saw that it fitted like a charm.

"Now, then, gentlemen," said Young Jackson, "you notice, as I remarked, that the second button is missing from Mr. Constable's coat?"

"Yes—yes!" cried the spectators.

"Very well," Young Jackson went on. "The question is, where is that button? Can any of you tell?"

"Bah," said Hill. "I lost that button off a month ago in New York."

"That's a lie, and I can prove it; but first, gentlemen, you are doubtless all aware that Mr. Hill, your enterprising constable, has lost his middle finger down to the second joint," said Young Jackson.

Hill made a movement as though to lower his maimed hand.

"Keep it up, so all can see it, or down you go," ordered Young Jackson, cocking his pistol warningly. "Now, then, Miss Heath," continued Young Jackson, "please hold up your father's pocket-book."

Mabel did so, and all saw that upon its light-colored surface was the imprint of a human hand made in blood as the hand had grasped it, and they all noticed that in this accusing stain the middle finger was wanting, from the second joint up.

Hill began to tremble like a leaf.

"You see the point I want to make?" Young Jackson went on.

"Yes, yes!" answered the villagers eagerly.

"Hill's the man," said some one.

"Hill's the cuss; an' I thought so from the fust," said old Ben.

"Now, then, gentlemen, just one point more, and I am done," Young Jackson went on. "This dog of mine is a detective in his way. When I came into this cottage I found him standing over the dead body of Mr. Heath, and I noticed that he had something in his mouth. Open your mouth, Dragon, and let us see what you have found. The dog opened his mouth and a button fell upon the floor. Young Jackson held it up, and all saw it was the missing button from Hill's coat.

"It's a clear case, and I arrest you instead of you arresting me!" said Young Jackson, producing a pair of handcuffs.

"Who are you?" demanded Hill.

"Young Jackson; and this is my dog detective!" was the answer, as the speaker placed his hand upon the head of his canine assistant.

Hill was handcuffed and led away to the village jail, and although there was some talk of lynching, Young Jackson walked by his prisoner's side with his pistol in his hand, and there was no attempt made to do so.

Hill was in due course of time tried, convicted and executed. Before his death he returned the money he had stolen. Young Jackson became a frequent visitor at the cottage on the cliff, and if he does not one day make Miss Mabel his wife, it will be no fault of his.

A man entered a drug store in a hurry and asked for a dozen two-grain quinine pills. "Shall I put 'em in a box, sir?" the clerk asked as he counted them out. "Oh, no," replied the customer. "I want to roll them home."

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